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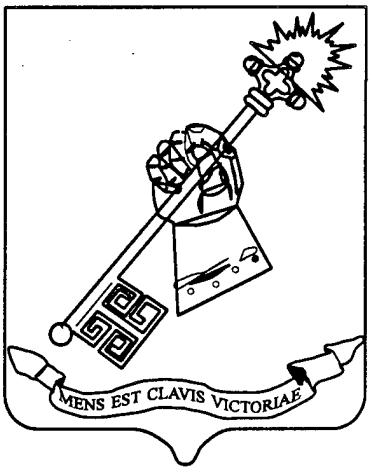
BROKEN STILETTO
Command and Control of the Joint Task Force During Operation Eagle Claw at Desert One

A Monograph
By
Major William C. Flynt III
Infantry



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ABSTRACT

This monograph examines Operation Eagle Claw, the attempt to rescue the American hostages held in Iran, for planning considerations pertinent to similar operations. It focusses specifically on the principle of war Unity of Command as a command and control imperative for a Joint Task Force composed of multiple services, organizations, and agencies.

To great extent Operation Eagle Claw's history may parallel the characteristics of contingencies facing today's Armed Forces. An unexpected crisis erupts, intense media coverage thrusts it before domestic and international audiences, a Joint Task Force is formed of all U.S. services, and a military operation is launched to protect and further American interests abroad. Because of the potential similarity between Operation Eagle Claw and future crisis situations, the operation's command and control aspects are relevant for today's planners to study.

Operation Eagle Claw failed. The failure can be directly attributed to a failure of leadership in ensuring Unity of Command. Although a dangerous and difficult mission, the operation's undoing was not the impossible nature of the task assigned to the force, nor an unfortunate measure of "bad luck." The failure of Operation Eagle Claw was preventable given strong leadership and a cohesive rescue force. These qualities were lacking, and the absence of Unity of Command was ultimately the causal reason for the operation's many difficulties.

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES

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Introduction

Command and control was excellent at the upper echelons, but became more tenuous and fragile at intermediate levels. Command relationships below the Commander, JTF, were not clearly emphasized in some cases and were susceptible to misunderstandings under pressure.[1]

On 4 November 1979 the American Embassy in Tehran was overrun by a mob. In the ensuing takeover 53 Americans were taken hostage. Figuratively speaking, America itself was held hostage as well, captivated by the nightly counting of the days of the crisis on television. The world's greatest superpower appeared powerless to counter the terrorist actions of a small mob of university students.

Increasingly desperate for a solution to the diplomatic stalemate, President Carter ordered a bold rescue attempt. In the early morning hours of 24 April 1980, less than six months after the beginning of the crisis, a Joint Task Force composed of components from every military service failed dramatically in an effort to free the hostages. In the aftermath of the rescue attempt, international humiliation was added to injury. American citizens were infuriated when media coverage showed Iranians desecrating American servicemens' bodies. As the crisis progressed it became a major campaign issue for the Carter Administration. The hostage drama did not end until two minutes after Ronald Reagan took the Oath of Office. The military operation's failure to end the crisis had ultimately contributed to a presidential election defeat.

In many ways Operation Eagle Claw was very much like contingencies now facing the U.S. Armed Forces. An unexpected crisis erupts; intense media coverage thrusts it before domestic and international audiences; a Joint Task Force (JTF) is formed; and an operation is launched. Successful resolution of the crisis can mean political triumph for an Administration; failure can spell both political and military disaster for the nation.

Operation Eagle Claw offers a military planner lessons that span many of

the Battlefield Operating Systems (BOS). Of particular importance is Command and Control (C2). FM 100-5 states that the Army will operate "as part of a joint, combined, or interagency team."[2] Planning and execution of Operation Eagle Claw involved the National Command Authority, every armed service, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Department of State (DoS), foreign governments including Egypt and Oman, and even American and foreign private citizens. As a C2 challenge Operation Eagle Claw is a forerunner of today's joint, interagency and combined operations. Lessons learned from the tragedy of Operation Eagle Claw are directly relevant to operations facing today's military planners.

This monograph examines the command and control arrangements for Operation Eagle Claw. It focusses specifically on Unity of Command as a planning and operational imperative for a JTF containing multiple organizations. In this monograph Unity of Command means: "all forces operate under a single commander with the requisite authority to direct all forces employed in pursuit of a common purpose."[3]

Chapter One examines the national level direction of Operation Eagle Claw. The chapter outlines the planning and decision-making process and addresses the role of the Special Coordinating Committee. It concentrates specifically on Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the National Security Advisor, and his role in forging Unity of Command at the national level. Chapter Two covers the basic plan for the hostage rescue attempt and sets the stage for understanding the complex nature of the operations at Desert One. The chapter examines whether the plan's design contributed to the failure to establish Unity of Command, and whether the plan's complexity increased the likelihood that command and communications would fail. The tactical direction of the operation is covered in Chapter Three. The chapter analyzes six factors contributing to the operation's ultimate failure: service involvement, movement to and actions at Desert One, C3, Operations Security, the lack of rehearsal, and the physical environment. All

of these factors had a significant negative effect on command and control. Chapter Four concludes the monograph with a review of the fundamental factors causing the operation's failure and considerations for future operations.

Chapter One: National Level Direction of Operation Eagle Claw

"In the midst of all this was Brzezinski, the strong-willed, Polish-born hardliner, whose task was to coordinate and synthesize the different views of the Departments of State and Defense and the C.I.A. and present them to the President."[4]

The structure of the command and control system during Operation Eagle Claw can be understood in two parts: national and tactical level direction. The official after-action review of the mission, the Holloway Report, concludes that command and control was excellent at the national level, but "fragile" and "tenuous" below the Joint Task Force level.[5] Integration of the national and tactical levels is not unprecedented for sensitive military operations. What was unique and a major contributing factor to the disaster at Desert One is the extreme centralization and compartmentalization of the operation below the national level. The centralization and compartmentalization created several separate "stovepipe" channels of tactical C2 at the Desert One site. The "stovepipe" organization of the tactical level contrasts with the national direction of the rescue attempt. National level direction was unified through the Special Coordinating Committee (SCC) chaired by Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's National Security Advisor (NSA).

The SCC was a standing crisis-management committee led by the strong-willed Dr. Brzezinski.[6] His own description of the committee provides perhaps the most concise depiction of its high-level composition and charter:

> I chaired scores of meetings, and they were attended frequently by the Vice President; the Secretaries of State, Defense and Treasury; the Director of Central Intelligence; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Attorney General, and the President's legal counsel, press secretary and chief of staff. The S.C.C. thus became a broad-based body, coordinating all facets of our response, ranging from the diplomatic to the military to the financial, as well as public relations and domestic policies.[7]

From Dr. Brzezinski's description it is clear the SCC incorporated the key

government representatives from the departments most concerned with national security policy and directly involved in the efforts to resolve the crisis. Dr. Brzezinski's depiction of the SCC, however, does not reveal the magnitude of his personal role in influencing development of military options for resolving the crisis. He consolidated his own influence by dividing the SCC's focus.

Dr. Brzezinski quickly split measures to resolve the crisis into two approaches: the diplomatic and economic, and the military.[8] The full representation of the SCC, chaired by Dr. Brzezinski, charted the diplomatic and economic approach. Early in the crisis, however, the military option became the exclusive concern of a much smaller cell that included only senior officials of the State Department, Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Council. This small cell operated outside the framework of the much larger SCC, and its activity was tightly compartmented.[9] Brzezinski described the cell and its charter:

> I presided also over a small and highly secret group, involving only Harold Brown [Secretary of Defense], General Jones [Chairman of the JCS], and Stan Turner [Director of Central Intelligence], which was concerned with the development of military options. None of the other members of the SCC were permitted to take part in the meetings of this group, and we often met in my office rather than in the Situation Room.[10]

Brzezinski's influence, however, extended beyond this select cell. He also was the undisputed master of the SCC's agenda and tightly controlled committee access to the President.

Dr. Brzezinski generally opened meetings of the SCC with a brief summary of President Carter's guidance to the various government agencies. He then announced the agenda. The agenda was not announced before the meeting ostensibly because of the daily changes in the situation. Immediately after the meeting Dr. Brzezinski would review a summary and then deliver it to the President. The President would then review the summary and make brief

comments in the margins, which Brzezinski would then issue as guidance to the SCC's members the next day.[11]

Thus Dr. Brzezinski personally chaired every meeting of the SCC and the military planning cell, controlled their actions and influence, and served as the routine, almost exclusive, conduit for information between the SCC and the President. His capability to control directly the meetings of both policy groups gave him disproportionate power. Brzezinski's ability to influence the agenda and products of both the full SCC and the smaller cell consolidated his control over all aspects of national security policy. Theoretically the President controls national security policy personally, but the *de facto* principal for national policy during the Iranian crisis was Dr. Brzezinski.

Other cabinet members and representatives of the SCC resented Brzezinski's exclusive control of the planning for the military option.[12] Their resentment, however, was without effect. Brzezinski had moved very early in the crisis to seize and consolidate the reins of power over the military planning. Within two days of the embassy takeover by the Iranian students, Dr. Brzezinski had even personally visited the Special Operations Division in the Pentagon and "instilled in the planners a sense of urgency."[13] Throughout the crisis he maintained personal contact with the military planners, frequently circumventing the Chairman of the JCS and the Secretary of Defense. Thus, no one could challenge Dr. Brzezinski's authority and assert control over the military option planning cell. No one was more familiar with the compartments of the evolving operation, and no one else enjoyed his authority when dealing with the senior officials of the JCS, Defense Department, State Department, and the CIA.

The one man who might have challenged Brzezinski's preeminence did not. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was disenchanted with his role in the Carter administration. His unhappiness can be traced to at least two factors: his highly-publicized feud with Dr. Brzezinski and his philosophical disagreement with the President on how to best deal with the crisis.

Gary Sick points out that in the second year of the Carter Administration the much-touted Vance-Brzezinski rivalry was "still quite muted."[14] The hostage crisis was, however, to bring into the open what had until then been smoldering beneath the surface. Secretary Vance had set two conditions for accepting nomination as Secretary of State: first, that he would be the President's spokesman on foreign policy; second, that he would be given the opportunity to counter any foreign policy advice Dr. Brzezinski gave before the President made a decision.[15] During the course of the hostage crisis Secretary Vance was not the foreign policy spokesman and he lost the influence and access to counter Dr. Brzezinski.

Dr. Brzezinski first assumed the role of *de facto* foreign policy spokesman on 1 November 1979. At an Algerian independence celebration in Algiers, Dr. Brzezinski met with the Iranian Prime Minister Bazargan and his Foreign Minister Ibrahim Yazdi.[16] Vance later described this meeting as "unfortunate." Secretary Vance asserted that the meeting between Dr. Brzezinski and the Iranian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister had weakened their influence and strengthened Khomeini.[17] Dr. Brzezinski later pled innocent to the charge he had invaded the Secretary of State's turf and asserted that Bazargan had sought the meeting. Nevertheless, Vance saw Dr. Brzezinski's actions as an intrusion into State Department business that, in fact, led to Prime Minister Bazargan's resignation just five days later. Bazargan's resignation cleared the way for Khomeini's consolidation of power. Secretary Vance's second condition allowing him to counter any advice Brzezinski gave the President was violated immediately before the failed rescue attempt. President Carter made the decision to mount the military operation while Vance was vacationing in Florida. Both incidents illustrate just how isolated Secretary Vance had become from the President. The incidents also illustrate how dominant Dr. Brzezinski was in the small circle managing the crisis.

The actions of the U.S. Ambassador to Iran, Ambassador Sullivan, helped

to worsen the relationship between the President and Secretary Vance. Ambassador Sullivan did not believe the President's policy was correct, and he did not faithfully represent it with allies and the Iranians. President Carter grew to doubt his ambassador's competence and willingness to represent U.S. policy. Because of this the President dispatched a military man, General Huyser, to Iran to overtly shadow Ambassador Sullivan and monitor his activity. Ambassador Sullivan and General Huyser reported the situation in Tehran differently. The difference between Ambassador Sullivan and General Huyser caused the President to recall Sullivan.[18] Vance intervened and argued emphatically that changing ambassadors during the crisis would worsen the situation. President Carter relented, but Sullivan from that point on had no influence.

Carter's frustration and anger with the conduct of the State Department is evident in his description of the situation:

> As I compared what he [General Huyser] told me with what our Ambassador in Iran had done and said, I became even more disturbed at the apparent reluctance in the State Department to carry out my directives fully and with enthusiasm. Its proper role was to advise me freely when a decision was being made, but then to carry it out and give me complete support once I had issued a directive.[19]

President Carter was so angry he personally summoned and then lambasted State Department desk officers in a special meeting he called just for the occasion. Although "there had not been any differences" between his position and his subordinates on the National Security Council staff, President Carter then also spoke to Dr. Brzezinski's people "to balance the slate."[20]

Throughout the early development of the crisis President Carter found his NSC in almost complete harmony with both the Department of Defense and his own beliefs in how best to approach the problem, but felt confronted by his State Department. President Carter described the relationship, "I hardly know the desk officers and others in State, but work very closely with NSC people."[21] The isolation of the State Department from the President increased the relative

importance and latitude of Dr. Brzezinski.

Secretary Vance personally contributed to Dr. Brzezinski's power by not attending SCC meetings. His refusal to participate effectively surrendered any potential influence over the SCC's agenda.[22] This left the *unchallenged control* of the SCC's development of the military option to Brzezinski. Vance admits this in his memoirs, "Political oversight and coordination of this military planning on the civilian side was handled by Brzezinski and Brown."[23]

Dr. Brzezinski took full advantage of the situation and tightened his control over the military option by creating a much smaller cell of solely executive agents within the SCC. This cabinet-level "steering committee" consisting of the Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff David Jones effectively controlled the planning and development of the Delta Force rescue option. President Carter initially included Vance in this small circle, but because he refused to participate Secretary Vance exerted no influence. As the crisis progressed Vance became even more remote and unhappy with the Administration's course. The schism between Vance and the President served only to widen the discretion exercised by Dr. Brzezinski.

National level planning and control of the military option was *centralized*, *clear* and *decisive*. The key actors understood the conditions which would cause the President to order execution. The mission's objective was also clear. The wisdom of concentrating that much power in the hands of Brzezinski and the gradual exclusion of the "unbeliever" Vance is, of course, debatable. The President was not completely isolated, but he received most of his information about the crisis through of Dr. Brzezinski. Nevertheless, the delineation of authority within the Executive Branch was clear, and the result was strong *unity of command*. Brzezinski effectively ran the show, and the President generally approved the recommendations, decisions, and actions of his National Security Adviser. As the Holloway Report correctly states: "Command and control was excellent at the upper echelons."[24]

Chapter Two: The Force and the Plan

"What used to be a simple decision has become a complex plan, and the word of command has turned into lengthy dispositions, based on time-tables and other data."[25]

To understand the events at Desert One, it is necessary to first understand the *entire* hostage rescue plan, including the force built to execute the plan. The design of aircraft loads, structure of specific elements, timing of events, and locations of activities at Desert One all depend on later planned tasks. Some aspects of the mission are still classified, but many participants have documented the substantive details in their memoirs, articles and books. The plan as outlined in this chapter is from Colonel Beckwith's book Delta Force and Colonel James Kyle's book The Guts to Try. Colonel Beckwith and Colonel Kyle were the senior officers at Desert One. Colonel Kyle's book is a more credible source and is relied upon when the two accounts diverge because Colonel Kyle's work is better documented.[26]

Operation Eagle Claw called for the rescue forces to take off from the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Nimitz and Masirah Island in the Gulf of Oman, infiltrate Iran during hours of darkness, hide during the next day, and then strike the embassy the following night and immediately exfiltrate from a remote airfield within Iran. If everything went well, in less than 48 hours the rescue force would free the hostages.

Unlike the National level planning and control, which was *centralized*, *clear* and *decisive*, the rescue plan called for *decentralized*, *autonomous* planning, control, and execution by multiple elements often physically separated by hundreds of miles. Given a strong leader and good communication equipment this difficulty might have been overcome, but the imposition of radio silence further complicated the situation. The design of the plan also had significant command and control weaknesses. The absence of a

single commander, combined with the plan's complexity, made the probability of success unlikely.

THE FORCE

The structure of the rescue force was highly-fractured. The rescue force consisted of at least thirteen separate sub-elements, without a single unifying factor that could join all of them as a team.

The first element of the rescue force was Delta. The size of this contingent changed throughout the months of planning for the mission. Seventy personnel was the initial figure for transportation and operational planning.[27] The Delta Force was essentially a U.S. Army force composed of men from Special Forces and Ranger backgrounds. The number of men in Delta's element eventually rose to 93 operators and staff personnel.[28] Delta Force had been formed despite strong opposition in the U.S. Army's Special Forces community, which had fielded an organization called Project Blue Light as a viable alternative to fielding Delta Force. After bitter in-fighting between the Army Chief of Staff and the Army's Special Forces leadership, Delta was chosen to be the organization tasked with antiterrorist strike operations.

The second subunit was a 13-man special operations team tasked with assaulting the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The team was to rescue the U.S. *chargé d'affaires* and two State Department colleagues being held separate from the main body of hostages in the U.S. embassy. The element was drawn from a Special Forces unit stationed in Germany, and had only trained with the Delta Force infrequently. The element, nevertheless, was under the operational command of Colonel Beckwith, the Delta Force commander.[29] The planned command and control relationship gave Colonel Beckwith operational control of an element that was separated by a mile of downtown Tehran. Additionally, Colonel Beckwith would be leading Delta in the assault while trying to control the Special Forces element. Adding to the complexity, Colonel Pitman was tasked with overseeing the assault of the Ministry of Defense: "He [Colonel

Pitman] was riding in the back of [Helicopter] No. 5 because that aircraft was to make the pickup of Bruce Laingen at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Pitman [a Marine] was to ensure that part of the mission went according to plan."[30] The lack of Unity of Command is already apparent in examining the interaction and control of these first two sub-elements of the rescue force. A Marine officer flying in a helicopter under radio silence was to "ensure" that an Army Special Forces team inside a building and under the operational control of a distant element's commander accomplished its mission.

The third element in the rescue force was a 12-man Road Watch Team from Lieutenant Colonel Sherm Williford's Ranger Battalion. Major Jesse Johnson and Captain Wade Ishimoto from Delta were in charge of this team tasked with ground security of the road near Desert One.[31] The two Delta officers had never met or trained with this element until just days before the mission's execution.

The fourth subcomponent consisted of twelve soldiers armed with Redeye missiles. Their purpose was to protect the force from Iranian air attack.[32] Because there are no references to this element in open sources, its role and control cannot be addressed.

The fifth working element in the plan was a team of eleven Farsi linguists tasked to transport the rescue force in trucks and vans from the hide site, Desert Two, to Tehran. This element would communicate with local inhabitants as required to lessen the conspicuous character of the rescue force. These linguists were drawn from both military and civilian sources. One linguists was a U.S. Navy captain from the Naval War College.[33]

The helicopter crews constituted the sixth major element of the rescue force. Within this sub-element the pilots were Marine aviators, with a token representation of Navy and Air Force personnel. The selection of these crews remains one of the most contentious issues in the literature surrounding Operation Eagle Claw, as already examined above.

The seventh element of the rescue force was the U.S. Air Force Combat Control Teams on the ground at Desert One. The Combat Control Teams would direct the airplanes during the refueling operation. This element was under the control of U.S. Air Force Major John Carney.[34]

The eighth element involved in the rescue force was the transport and tanker C-130s flying the rescue force into Desert One and refueling the helicopters. These aircraft were under the control of Lieutenant Colonel Kyle, assisted in his control duties by Major Carney.

The ninth element the plan called for were the Navy fighters basing from the U.S.S. Nimitz. This element would participate if called in to support the force with air strikes.[35] The fighters would have remained under the control of the Nimitz. Following the abandonment of Desert One, Colonel Beckwith called for this element to strike the abandoned helicopters at Desert One. The request was disapproved at the national level due to concern for the Iranians left behind at Desert One.

The tenth element of the rescue force was a CIA agent. His mission was to provide information on the activities of the Iranian students at the U.S. embassy, select the planned hide site for Delta and routes to and from the U.S. embassy, identify potential checkpoints and the locations of Iranian reaction forces, and other details of concern to the rescue operation.[36] The agent remained under the control of the CIA.

Four DoD agents inserted into Tehran made up the eleventh element of the rescue force. The agents were to confirm the activity of the Iranian students at the U.S. embassy and assist in Delta's planned operations. Colonel Beckwith insisted on these agents, because he believed he needed his own people to tell him what the situation was at the target site.[37]

The twelveth subunit was the group of approximately 100 Rangers under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Sherm Williford. The Rangers operated independently from Delta. Their task was to secure the landing strip near

Manzariyeh.[38]

The thirteenth sub-element was made up of two Iranian generals who had no specific mission assigned to them and were not under anyone's explicit control. These individuals were added at the last minute to the rescue force, apparently for no good tactical military purpose, but for political considerations.[39] They had not participated in any rehearsals, nor were they formally assigned physical positions on aircraft. They were not familiar with the plan, and did not know any of the participants.

Within the fractured structure of the rescue force lay the seeds of disaster. No one commanded all the elements present at Desert One. Some elements literally worked together for the first time during the operation. The chances of all the moving parts coming together to perform as a cohesive unit were, thus, remote. Unity of Command had not been designed into the rescue force. Perhaps a strong leader known and recognized by all the elements might have overcome the faulty organization to save the rescue mission. A strong, charismatic leader might have unified command through the sheer force of will. Unfortunately, the command of the rescue force was also fractured. Instead of a strong leader in charge at Desert One, there were four different major element commanders representing three separate services: Army, Air Force, and Marine. There was no Unity of Command.

The rescue force's design was flawed. The design did not ensure Unity of Command. The fractured nature of the force hampered development as a team, and inhibited mission execution. The plan's complexity exacerbated the already significant problems inherent in the force's design.

THE PLAN: NIGHT-ONE

As planned, the operation would start with three MC-130s departing the island of Masirah off the coast of Oman (see Appendix A: Figure One). The three MC-130s were to transport the Delta Force, truck drivers, a US Army Ranger roadblock team, translators, a Special Forces team, and USAF combat controllers.

A total of 139 personnel would arrive at Desert One under cover of darkness.[40]

The time schedule called for the first MC-130 to depart at dusk, one hour ahead of the remaining two aircraft. The lead aircraft would arrive before the rest of the force to make sure the area was clear for landing (see Appendix A: Figure Two). Three additional aircraft (EC-130s modified to serve as ground tankers) would follow. The ground tankers carried 18,000 gallons of jet fuel for the inbound helicopters. Concurrent with the MC-130 flight, eight RH-53 Sea Stallion helicopters would depart from the USS Nimitz. The Nimitz was sailing in the Gulf of Oman approximately fifty nautical miles south of the Iranian coast. The eight helicopters would head for Desert One, located 265 nautical miles south-east of Tehran to refuel and pick up Delta Force. The site lies in a giant salt desert at 33° 05' N by 55° 48' E, and this particular region's desolation made detection less likely.[41] The plan called for the helicopters to fly in four sections of two helicopters each from the Nimitz to the coast of Iran. When near populated areas the helicopters were to fly in an echelon formation with the "heavy" side away from villages (see Appendix A: Figure Three). An echelon formation lessens the chances of visual detection. The plan called for the helicopters to fly over open desert in a simple staggered trail formation to improve control of the flight formation (see Appendix A: Figure Three).

On landing at Desert One the advance party on the lead MC-130 was responsible for positioning the roadblock team. The roadblock team consisted of U.S. Army Rangers and Delta Force individuals. The plan tasked the USAF combat controllers to set up landing zones on the north and south sides of the road that bisected Desert One and start a TACAN signal beacon to guide in the aircraft. The time schedule called for the second and third MC-130s to land at Desert One with the remainder of the Delta Force approximately an hour later.[42]

At this point in the plan the entire rescue force would be moving in separate elements. The plan's success hinged completely on making critical times because the limiting factor for successful infiltration were the hours of darkness.

The chances were nil of a successful infiltration during daylight. None of the elements could communicate with each other due to the imposition of radio silence. The absence of Unity of Command and the inability to communicate with other elements made success contingent on meeting the time schedule. Hinging the plan on a detailed time schedule executed by separate elements made the plan very fragile; failure to meet the time schedule meant the mission would fail. Had there been a single commander with the authority and capability to direct all the forces the rescue force could have dealt with unforeseen contingencies. As the situation at this point existed, however, there was no margin for error. This demand for strict adherence to the plan and the lack of flexibility caused by the absence of Unity of Command contained the seeds of disaster. The helicopter flight had difficulty in reaching Desert One, and their inability to inform a commander and seek an alternative course of action based on the overall situation caused the mission to become unsynchronized.

According to plan, two of the three EC-130s would land three to six minutes behind the Delta Force's MC-130s. On arrival of the two EC-130s, the two leading MC-130s would depart Desert One and return to Masirah. The departure of these two MC-130s would reduce congestion at the site. The third EC-130 tanker would then land, making four aircraft at Desert One: two EC-130s on the north side of the road and one EC-130 on the south side along with an MC-130. The planned called for the remaining MC-130 on the south side of the road to carry 500-gallon blivets aboard as a backup fuel supply (see Appendix A: Figure Four).[43]

The helicopters would arrive at Desert One approximately fifteen minutes after the third EC-130 tanker landed. Each helicopter would then receive 1,750 gallons of fuel, after which the Delta Force would immediately board the helicopters and proceed to the hide site (see Appendix A: Figure One). Should all eight RH-53s arrive at Desert One, three would marshal behind each of the two tankers north of the road and the remaining two would marshal behind the tanker

on the south side. Should only six helicopters arrive, the plan called for two helicopters behind each EC-130 tanker.[44] Unless six helicopters - a minimum number the air planners thought necessary to lift the combined weight of the rescue force - were able to depart and fly to the next location, the rescue force would abort the mission.[45]

The planned site configuration for refueling the helicopters did not allow for "friction" in their arrival order at Desert One. The USAF combat controllers would have to play an important part in jockeying the aircraft behind the tankers. The combat controllers had the ability to communicate with every air crew at Desert One using radios. During execution, however, the combat controllers relied on face-to-face communication and ground guides to direct the helicopters. The darkness and other conditions made it difficult to direct helicopters using ground guides and this further complicated the situation at Desert One.

The plan allowed forty-five minutes to complete the refueling and loading operation at Desert One. After loading the rescue force the helicopters would fly for approximately two hours and ten minutes to a landing zone near the planned hide site. The planned hide site was approximately sixty miles southeast of Tehran. At the landing zone, Delta would link-up with two Department of Defense (DoD) agents. These agents infiltrated Teheran several days before the operation. The agents would lead Colonel Beckwith and his men five miles overland to a remote wadi sixty-five miles southeast of Teheran.[46] The Delta Force would hide in abandoned salt mines and make final preparations for the strike on Night Two.

After refueling the helicopters the four aircraft (3 EC-130s, and 1 MC-130) would depart Desert One. The aircraft would then link up with KC-135 airborne tankers 120 miles south of the Gulf of Oman, and after in-flight refueling return to the Masirah airfield.[47]

After dropping off Delta Force at the hide site - located at 35° 14' N by 52° 15' E - the helicopters would fly approximately fifty miles to the north.[48] Here the

helicopter crews would establish a remote laager site near the town of Garmsar. The crews would land, set up defensive positions, and camouflage the aircraft prior to sunrise. The helicopters and crews were to remain hidden until Colonel Beckwith called them to extract the hostages and the Delta Force during the Night Two strike operation. The plan called for all forces are to be concealed by dawn.

After the rescue force infiltrated, JTF headquarters in Wadi Kena, Egypt, would monitor Iranian communications. Monitoring would warn of mission compromise and enable the JTF HQ to receive situation updates from agents in the vicinity of the embassy.[49]

THE PLAN: NIGHT-TWO

A Ranger force would take off at dusk on Night Two from Wadi Kena aboard four MC-130s. The Ranger force was to seize an airfield at Manzariyeh to allow safe extraction of the hostages and Delta Force from Iran (see Appendix A: Figure Six). Four AC-130 gunships, one as a spare, were to depart Wadi Kena shortly after these MC-130s. The gunships would refuel in flight, with only three continuing on to Iran after refueling.[50] The plan called for one of the gunships to provide close air support for Beckwith's forces at the embassy. The second gunship was to suppress any fighter ground activity at Mehrabad Airport on the outskirts of Tehran. The third gunship would provide air support to the rescue force during exfiltration from Manzariyeh. All aircraft flying to Iran were to be refueled over Saudi Arabia by KC-135 tankers.

Ten minutes after the Rangers seized Manzariyeh airfield two C-141s would land.[51] One of the C-141s would handle any wounded or injured personnel. The other C-141 would have airline-style passenger seats. These aircraft would fly the hostages and rescue force out of Iran.

The plan tasked a DoD agent with the mission of driving Colonel Beckwith into Tehran after dusk on Night Two. Colonel Beckwith would reconnoiter Delta's planned routes during the drive.[52] A bus would follow Colonel Beckwith to infiltrate six driver teams. The driver teams consisted of a

truck driver and a translator. In Tehran the driver teams would pick up six trucks prepositioned by CIA and DoD operatives.

At this point in the plan the leader of the major assault element, Delta, would be physically separated from his force to accomplish a simple route confirmation reconnaissance. The separation of Colonel Beckwith from Delta was not tactically sound. It subjected the key assault leader to an increased probability of detection and possible capture. A simple route confirmation reconnaissance mission was completely within the capability of the CIA and DoD agents already in Tehran. Colonel Beckwith's separation from his force at this point in the plan was an unnecessary risk, and a command and control weakness.

The plan then called for the driver teams to return to Delta's hide site and pick up the rescue force. The trucks had false walls to hide the force enroute to Tehran.[53] Based on his reconnaissance of Tehran, Colonel Beckwith would order the Delta Force forward. The planned routes called for the driver teams to get past two roadblocks. During the movement of the Delta Force a thirteen-man Special Forces team was to move simultaneously to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on a different route. The Special Forces team's mission was to free three hostages held separate from the main group.

The time schedule called for the strike to begin at 2300 hours. The plan allowed a margin of plus-or-minus forty-minutes to actually breach the wall. The exact timing depended on the local disposition of the Iranian guards. The Ranger force would seize the airfield at Manzariyeh only upon Colonel Beckwith's command. Likewise, Colonel Beckwith would transmit a code word to move the gunship.[54]

Colonel Beckwith would order the helicopters forward after Delta entered the embassy compound (see Appendix A: Figure Five). Four helicopters would fly to the Amjadieh soccer stadium, located across Roosevelt Avenue from the embassy compound. Two helicopters would fly to a location near the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These two helicopters would pick up the Special Forces team

tasked to free *chargé de affaires* Bruce Laingen and two members of his staff. The pickup zone for the Special Forces team was a park adjacent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[55]

The plan allowed forty-five minutes for the operation, with most of the hostages freed within 30 minutes. The hostages would then move across Roosevelt Avenue into the stadium for helicopter extraction. A branch of the plan was for one or two RH-53s to land inside the compound and load the hostages. Colonel Beckwith would determine if this was possible once inside the embassy grounds.

Colonel Beckwith organized Delta into three elements for this mission: a Red Team, a White Team, and a Blue Team. The plan called for Delta to board trucks in their hide site at approximately 2030 hours. Should the trucks be stopped at a roadblock the Iranians would be seized and transported with Delta.

The precise route depended on what Colonel Beckwith observed during his reconnaissance. The 13-man Special Forces team, tasked with the Foreign Ministry Building mission, would take a different route to the Foreign Ministry.[56]

Between 2300 and 2400 hours a "hit team" would drive around the embassy compound and kill two stationary guards and any roving guards.[57] The trucks carrying Red, White, and Blue Teams would follow behind this "hit team." When the rescue force reached a position on Roosevelt Avenue between the compound and the soccer stadium they would off-load the vehicles and climb over the compound walls.[58]

Red Team, numbering forty men, would secure the western sector of the embassy compound. They would free any hostages found in the compound's staff cottages and commissary, and kill any guards in the motor pool and power plant areas of the compound.[59] Blue Team, also forty men, would secure the embassy's eastern sector. They were responsible for freeing any hostages found in the Deputy Chief of Mission's residence, the Ambassador's residence, the embassy's commissary, and the chancellery.[60] The White Team, numbering 13 operators,

would secure Roosevelt Avenue and overwatching the withdrawal of both Red and Blue Teams as they moved with the hostages to the soccer stadium.[61]

The plan called for the two AC-130 gunships on-station to stop Iranian forces from reinforcing the militants at the compound. Using a grid system that designated targets and sectors in the compound, two Delta Force operators would control the fire from the gunships.[62]

A Delta Force operator would blow the compound wall after the Red Team moved in position. The plan gave the Red Team the farthest distance to cover after going over the wall. The explosion would signal the teams to assault the buildings. During the positioning of the Delta Force the helicopters would depart their laager and orbit north of Tehran. On order, the helicopters would move to the compound and extract the hostages. Should the situation be too dangerous to land the helicopters in the compound they would land in the soccer stadium. The hostages would be accounted for by the Delta Force's medics.[63]

The priority of extraction was: the hostages, the Red team, the Blue team, and then the White team. If the helicopters were in the soccer stadium, the Red and Blue teams would withdraw through the hole blown in the wall and cross Roosevelt Avenue to the stadium. There the rescue force would load on the remaining helicopters not filled with hostages.[64]

The 13-man Special Forces element would assault the Foreign Ministry Building concurrent with Delta's storming of the embassy. The plan called for the team to scale the building and enter through its third story windows. They would kill any guards and free the U.S. embassy's *chargé de affaires* Bruce Laingen and two of his staff. In an adjacent park one of the RH-53 helicopters would land and extract the team and the hostages.[65] Colonel Beckwith was to control the actions of the team according to the plan. Colonel Beckwith, however, was physically located with Delta in storming the embassy compound. Thus, the *de facto* command and control of the Special Forces team remained with its team leader. Assigning Colonel Beckwith control of the Special Forces team is another

command and control weakness of the plan. It is unlikely Colonel Beckwith could have controlled their actions as he was assaulting the embassy compound, and doubtful he could have assisted them should they need help. This flaw demonstrates the absence of Unity of Command in designing the rescue force. Colonel Beckwith evidently recognized this fact, as he further informally tasked Colonel Pitman, the USMC colonel with the helicopter lift, with the responsibility to oversee this team. This arrangement was just as unrealistic, however, as the next chapter will explain.

A branch to the plan dealt with the loss of helicopters due to enemy fire. Should there not be enough helicopters to extract both the hostages and the rescue force out of Teheran in a single lift the branch called for Delta to establish a defense around the stadium. The helicopters would first deliver the hostages to the Ranger force at Manzariyeh. The helicopters would then return to the soccer stadium for the rescue force. This would continue, shuttle fashion, until the entire rescue force was extracted. Should the helicopters not return the plan called for Delta to escape and evade out of Tehran to Turkey.[66]

At Manzariyeh medics would triage the hostages and rescue force for required medical care. The hostages and rescue force would then board two C-141s for the flight out of Iran. The C-141 crews were responsible for extracting all of the hostages, drivers, translators, helicopter pilots, crews, DoD agents, the Special Forces assault team, and the Delta Force.[67]

After the C-141s took off the Ranger force would pull in from the airfield perimeter, board MC-130s, and return to Wadi Kena. The AC-130 gunships would protect the Rangers as they collapsed the perimeter. A Delta operator would prepare the RH-53 helicopters for explosive destruction, because there would not be sufficient fuel to fly them to friendly territory.[68] After leaving Iran the hostages, Delta Force, and the helicopter crews would depart the Middle East. The rest of the JTF would return to the United States over two or three days.

Success would depend on flawless execution, perfect timing, and

complete surprise. It was an exceptionally complex plan with many moving parts. Even the best unit under a capable leader would still face unfavorable odds. Given the complexity of the force, and most critically *the absence of Unity of Command*, the plan was a huge gamble.

Many other potential difficulties are inherent in the plan, and six of the most obvious are examined in the next chapter. The six factors are: service involvement, movement to and actions at Desert One, C3, Operations Security, the lack of rehearsal, and the physical environment. All six of these factors degraded the already tenuous cohesion of the rescue force and its chances of success. The net effect of the six factors examined in the Chapter Three would, in the end, throw the rescue force into almost total confusion.

Chapter Three: Tactical Level Direction of Operation Eagle Claw

"In Iran we had an ad hoc affair. We went out, found bits and pieces, people and equipment, brought them together occasionally and then asked them to perform a highly complex mission."[69]

Unfortunately, the Unity of Command at the national level did not exist at the JTF level. Authority and responsibility was divided among the separate element leaders. This fractured C2 would reach its worst in the Iranian desert on the morning of 24 April 1980. There were many factors that eroded the Unity of Command from the national level to Desert One. This chapter analyzes six of the major factors affecting the preparation and execution of the tactical direction of Operation Eagle Claw at Desert One. The six areas examined are service involvement, movement to and actions at Desert One, C3, Operations Security, the lack of rehearsal, and the physical environment.

SERVICE INVOLVEMENT

There was *no single leader* at the tactical level responsible for mission success. The problem was not that the JTF did not have a commander. The JTF did have a commander, Major General Vaught. Unfortunately, he did not take charge and lead, but instead either abrogated or lost his authority in many ways. There was no shortage of leaders, either. Indeed, the true problem was that there were too many leaders.

One of the effects of having too many leaders is the pressure to give each of them a unit to command. The President's personal concern with the mission increased the pressure to include many organizations. Nobody wanted to be left out of the action; an institution's budget can be justified through successful employment of its assets. The first factor that contributed to fragmented C2 was the desire of every service to be represented in the mission, which fostered a parochial attitude towards fielding elements of the rescue force.

The pressure to include representatives of every service is well-

documented. Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee on the rescue attempt, Dr. Brzezinski stated: "One basic lesson [to be learned from the failure of the mission] is that interservice interests dictated very much the character of the force that was used. Every service wished to be represented in this enterprise and that did not enhance cohesion and integration."[70] Major General John Singlaub cited the same pressure to ensure all the U.S. Armed Services were represented. On a BBC program in 1982, MG Singlaub replied to a question on the role of each service in the rescue force, "There were some political considerations. I think that an effort was made to get all of the services involved..." He then stated that the jointness and close intermixing of all the services "had a nice ring to it, in a public-relations sense."[71]

Colonel Kyle was an Air Force officer involved in the mission planning from the beginning of the crisis. He was also the on-site commander at Desert One, and responsible for coordinating the air operations of the rescue force. Additionally, he was the officially appointed Deputy Commander of the JTF until replaced by Lieutenant General Gast just days before mission execution. In his memoir he details the controversy surrounding the eventual selection of marines as the helicopter crew members. The RH-53 Sea Stallion helicopter used by the rescue force was a mine-sweeping aircraft operated by the U.S. Navy. Initially, the helicopters were manned by U.S. Navy crews under the control of U.S. Navy Captain Jerry Hatcher. Colonel Beckwith thought the Navy crews were not motivated or aggressive enough for the mission.[72] Additionally, Captain Hatcher was uncomfortable flying the mission profile. He believed it was too dangerous. Captain Hatcher even asked Colonel Kyle by whose authority the naval crews were ordered to perform in such a fashion.[73] In early December 1979 the Navy crews were replaced with Marine crews. Captain Hatcher was replaced by Marine Colonel Pitman. After taking charge of the helicopter force Colonel Pitman contacted Marine Lieutenant General Shutler, the JCS J-3, and "tapped the resources of Marine helicopter pilots worldwide."[74] Significantly, Colonel

Pitman did not tap the resources of all the services' pilots worldwide. Colonel Kyle believed that the failure to consider pilots from the USAF to replace the Navy crews was a mistake.

The JTF went on block leave for Christmas soon after Colonel Pitman chose the Marine helicopter crews. This left the Marine crews with little experience flying the mission's profile. Colonel Kyle felt that the best course of action might be to recruit USAF crews that were already qualified and experienced with the equipment and mission profiles of Special Operations Forces. After breaching this topic with the commander of the JTF, Major General Vaught, LTC. Kyle was told to "Get behind the Marine crews and support them."[75] In describing the situation, LTC. Kyle states: "An assistant close to the Chairman at the time revealed that General Jones felt he could not take the helicopter mission away from the Marines. The Chairman was embroiled in a heated argument with the Marine hierarchy over their tactical aircraft (fighters) coming under wartime operational control of a joint service theater air commander. Also, General Jones placed complete confidence in the advice of his director of operations, Marine Lieutenant General Shutler, and in Marine Colonel Chuck Pitman, his highly regarded helicopter pilot."[76]

Lieutenant Colonel Kyle was not the only senior JTF participant to voice concern about the selection of Marines to fly a Special Operations Force mission profile. Colonel Beckwith also questioned whether this was the best decision. Colonel Beckwith believed that Lieutenant General Shutler, the Marine JCS J-3, was manipulating the selection process, "The J-3 in the JCS at the time was a Marine lieutenant general named Phillip Shutler. Not surprising, therefore, a Marine unit of helicopter pilots was flown down to Camp Smokey for training."[77] The fact that a particular service's crews were chosen to fly the helicopters is immaterial as long as they could fly the mission profile. But what is disturbing is the intimation - made by two key, senior JTF planners and operators - that Marines were chosen because they were *Marines*. Colonel Beckwith states,

"Were these pilots the best-qualified men in Department of Defense? There was some suspicion at the time that there were those in the JCS who wanted to make sure *each of the services had a piece of the action.* Up till this point there had been no role for the Marines to play."[78] The controversy around the helicopter crews' selection is dominated by one fact: the two senior JTF planners and operators from two separate services both expressed reservations about the capability of the Marine crews to fly the mission, and they were overruled by MG. Vaught.

Thus parochial pressure to include every armed service in the operation perhaps led to the presence of both leaders and units in the rescue force that the JTF's senior planners and operators would not have chosen. The JTF commander did not pursue later recommendations from his senior JTF officers to release the Marine helicopter crews and to obtain more experienced and better trained USAF crews. Several JTF participants believed the pressure to ensure all services were represented was too great. The selection of the helicopter crews had an adverse impact even at the individual operator level, where first Navy crews expressed reluctance to perform, and then Marine crews proved unable to perform the demanding mission profile, while the Delta Force operators increasingly lost confidence in these crews' ability to fly the challenging mission.[79]

The Holloway Report points out the controversy also. The report states there existed sufficient US Air Force crews not only *trained* on the H-53 series helicopters, but also that many of them had *recent experience* in flying special profile missions. The Holloway Report concludes that USAF pilots would have "probably progressed more rapidly than pilots...trained in a markedly different role [i.e., USMC and Navy pilots]."[80] In selecting the helicopter crews the effort may have focussed not on finding the best pilots for the mission, but instead finding the best *Marine* pilots for the mission.

MOVEMENT TO and ACTIONS AT DESERT ONE

Operation Eagle Claw began poorly. At Masirah, the take off order of the

C-130s' became jumbled as they taxied into position, and the subsequent aircraft formation was never corrected. Not only was this an amateurish beginning, but two of the aircraft nearly collided while taxiing (see Appendix A: Figure Seven compared to Figure Two).[81]

The helicopters lifted off the U.S.S. Nimitz and all went well until the helicopters had crossed the Iranian coast and traveled approximately 140 nautical miles. At that point the crew of Helicopter 6 received an indication of a problem with its rotor blades and chose to abort the mission. Helicopter 6 landed inside Iran and its crew was picked up by Helicopter 8. As a result the flight was reduced to seven aircraft and Helicopter 8 was now trailing the flight by about 15 minutes (see Appendix A: Figure Eight).

Two-hundred and thirty nautical miles from the U.S.S. Nimitz, the flight encountered the first of two "haboobs," or suspended dust clouds. These dust clouds obscured visibility, and greatly increased the stress on the helicopters and crews. The first haboob was approximately 45 nautical miles deep, and the helicopter flight pressed on through it. Beyond the first haboob, however, was a second haboob (see Appendix A: Figure Nine). On encountering the second haboob, the flight leader in Helicopter 1 turned out of the second haboob and landed in the clear area between the two dust clouds, followed by Helicopter 2. Unfortunately, the remainder of the flight did not see Helicopters 1 and 2 turn out of the dust cloud, and the flight continued on. Helicopters 1 and 2 lifted off and resumed their flight thirty-five minutes after the other helicopters had passed them (see Appendix A: Figure Ten). The planned flight formation had become seriously disrupted.

The helicopter flight formation now consisted of essentially three separate groups of helicopters: Helicopters 3, 4, 5, and 7 comprising the first group; Helicopter 8 flying alone 15 minutes behind the main group; and the flight leader in Helicopter 1, with Helicopter 2 following, trailing about 35 minutes behind the main group (see Appendix A: Figure Ten). At this point Unity of Command

within the helicopter formation had been totally lost, and the three separate groups of helicopters were basically "on their own."

The helicopter flight was again diminished when Helicopter 5 developed trouble with its on-board navigation equipment and aborted the mission. Helicopter 5 turned around and made for the Nimitz. This helicopter was carrying Colonel Pitman who was the informally recognized, albeit not officially appointed, leader of the helicopter element (see Appendix A: Figure Eleven). This left six helicopters flying towards Desert One, the minimum needed to accomplish the mission.[82] Less than six helicopters had been established as the abort criteria for the rescue force and had been briefed to General Jones.[83] Fewer than six helicopters would require the rescue force to turn back. The flight was now in four separate groups. Helicopters 3 and 4 were leading. Helicopter 7 had dropped approximately ten minutes behind the flight because it had searched for Helicopter 5 after that helicopter aborted. Helicopter 8 flew alone about ten minutes behind Helicopter 3, and Helicopters 1 and 2 brought up the rear 35 minutes behind (see Appendix A: Figure Eleven). At this point the flight formation had lost all integrity and completely dissolved, and the disaster that would reach its fiery crescendo at Desert One was unfolding.

The C-130s had meanwhile landed at Desert One and were parked in the planned parking configuration in spite of errors made at takeoff (see Appendix A: Figure Twelve compared to Figure Four). The first C-130 landed at 1815Z hours (10:45 P.M. Iran time).[84] Prior to landing, the C-130 pilot saw a truck driving on the road that cut through the Desert One landing strip. He made an additional pass before landing to avoid compromising the mission. It is not known whether this truck observed the remotely-activated landing lights. However, after he landed the C-130 flight leader was compromised anyway when a bus with forty-four Iranians on-board drove into the site until stopped by members of the road watch element. At approximately 1820Z hours (10:50 P.M. Iran time) a second vehicle, a fuel tanker truck, drove into the site. The road watch team stopped the

fuel tanker with a Light Anti-tank Weapon (LAW). The rocket struck the fuel tank which exploded in a huge fireball. A small truck following the fuel tanker picked up the tanker's driver and escaped. Colonel Beckwith and Lieutenant Colonel Kyle both thought these two vehicles were most probably petrol smugglers. Within five minutes of landing the rescue force had taken forty-four Iranians captive. They had also started an intense fire that burned so brightly it interfered with the Night Observation Devices of the C-130 pilots and interfered with later landings. Additionally, at least two Iranians had observed the C-130 and the activity at Desert One and escaped.[85] After the arrival of the remaining C-130s, LTC. Kyle released MC-130s No. 1 and 2, in accordance with the plan, to return to Masirah. This reduced congestion at the site.

Further complicating the situation, the SATCOM radio on the lead C-130 had broken during the rough landing. The backup SATCOM was in the third C-130. When asked by LTC. Kyle why he had changed the aircraft's load plan, Colonel Beckwith replied, "No good reason. It just seemed like a good idea at the time."[86] This departure from even the poorly-rehearsed plan meant that the on-ground control post would not have direct, encrypted communications with Egypt or Masira. LTC. Kyle was forced to use High Frequency radios in short, coded bursts to communicate.

The helicopters arrived at Desert One one at a time and from different directions.[87] The USAF combat controllers directed the helicopters to their refueling positions behind the tanker aircraft (see Appendix A: Figure Thirteen). Although late, there still remained sufficient time to refuel the helicopters, load Delta onboard, and continue the mission to the hide site (Desert Two) before daylight.[88]

As the helicopters were refueling, Colonel Beckwith tried to get permission from the helicopter element's second-in-command, LTC. Seiffert, to board the helicopters. LTC. Seiffert was now in charge of the helicopter crews because Colonel Pitman was on Helicopter No. 5, which had aborted. Before

Colonel Beckwith requested permission to board, several pilots and crew members told LTC. Kyle and Colonel Beckwith to abandon the helicopters at Desert One and abort the entire mission. The helicopters pilots knew they had the required six helicopters, enough fuel, and sufficient darkness to continue the mission.[89] Colonel Beckwith boarded LTC. Seiffert's helicopter to request permission for Delta to load. LTC. Seiffert was preoccupied with refueling and coordinating with his helicopter crews and Colonel Beckwith became impatient. Colonel Beckwith then "got physical" to get the helicopter pilot's attention.[90] Immediately after this altercation, Beckwith received permission to board the Delta Force. Delta was boarding when Helicopter No. 2's crew noted a hydraulic leak and aborted. The leak was caused by a cracked nut that led to the backup flight controls.[91] The helicopter crew had identified the leak while enroute, and had indeed flown for almost two hours with the problem.[92] LTC. Seiffert refused to allow this helicopter to continue the mission, in spite of the fact that all aircraft were operating under wartime standards. Under this condition all aircraft are expected to continue the mission despite degraded mechanical condition. When Helicopter 2's crew aborted, the mission reached its abort criteria of less than six helicopters to transport Delta.[93] LTC. Kyle quotes Colonel Beckwith with the statement at this point, "They finally found an excuse to quit."[94] The question of Unity of Command at this point is superfluous; the rescue force had become dangerously dysfunctional.

The decision to abort was reported from Desert One first to Egypt and then to Washington. President Carter asked for confirmation of the situation from Colonel Beckwith (not Major General Vaught in Egypt) and on receiving Colonel Beckwith's personal recommendation to abort the mission, President Carter approved the decision.[95]

The JTF command post in Egypt ordered the rescue force to destroy Helicopter No. 2, release the Iranian captives, fly all operational aircraft back to Masirah and the Nimitz, and sanitize the area. Helicopter No. 4 had been waiting

for a long time with engines running and was short of fuel. Tanker 4 was also low on fuel. LTC. Kyle ordered Helicopters 3 and 4 to move from behind Tanker 4 to allow the tanker to depart Desert One. The helicopters were then going to top off their fuel tanks from Tanker 6.[96] While the helicopters were moving from behind Tanker 4, Helicopter No. 3 crashed into the C-130 (see Appendix A: Figure Fourteen).

In the confusion following the tremendous explosion the rescue force became completely disorganized. The members of Delta Force haphazardly boarded the surviving C-130s, and the remaining helicopters were abandoned (see Appendix A: Figure Fifteen).[97] The confusion created by the scramble for the C-130s later made it impossible to locate the key individual from Delta tasked with rigging the helicopters with explosive charges. No one was sure who was missing or present until the force held a muster, significantly enough by Service, back at Masirah.[98] At Desert One the rescue force left behind weapons, ammunition, functional aircraft, classified documents, and the bodies of eight American servicemen. The growing tension and animosity between the sub-elements of the rescue force had been replaced with panic. Unity of Command is impossible to achieve where there is no command exercised at all.

COMMAND, CONTROL, AND COMMUNICATIONS

The tactical direction of Operation Eagle Claw at Desert One assumed its final characteristics with the arrival of the helicopters. LTC. Kyle was acting as the on-scene commander, ostensibly responsible for exercising command over all elements and activities. He planned on directing the landing zone operations from a location on the road cutting through Desert One, although this was not an explicitly assigned or designated command post site.[99] *As with so many other details surrounding Operation Eagle Claw, it was a loosely understood arrangement, inadequately rehearsed, and vulnerable to misunderstanding.*

During the activity at Desert One Colonel Beckwith and LTC. Kyle often found themselves moving together from point to point. When Colonel Beckwith

was not physically accompanying LTC. Kyle, he was directing the actions of his Delta Force.[100] Colonel Beckwith and LTC. Kyle could only communicate face-to-face.

The C-130 crews remained in their aircraft during the operations at Desert One, with the exception of Colonel Tom Wicker. LTC. Kyle communicated with the C-130 crews through Wicker. When Colonel Wicker wanted to talk to LTC. Kyle he had to dismount his aircraft. Wicker and Kyle communicated face-to-face because there were no communications between the air crews and the ground elements.[101]

The helicopter element leader, LTC. Seiffert, unlike Wicker, remained in his aircraft and made his crews come to him when they needed to talk.[102] Again there was no provision for secure communications between aircraft. Inadequate and incompatible communications meant that individuals other than the road watch team, Delta Force, and the various element commanders, moved around Desert One in the dark and noise.

One element that did have radio contact with every pilot on the landing zone was Major Carney's combat controllers.[103] The combat controllers, however, did not have radio communications with the ground elements or Delta Force. The combat controllers were the logical choice to assist LTC. Kyle with control of all elements at Desert One. Had this element possessed radio communications with the ground elements, it could have served as the central reporting and orders clearinghouse for all activity at Desert One. As it turned out, however, even this means for communicating with all the pilots was not fully used. LTC. Seiffert's pilots could have relayed messages to him through the combat controllers instead of dismounting their helicopters, trudging through the dark, noise, and blasting sand to his helicopter to yell in his ear. Either LTC. Seiffert's pilots did not know they had this capability or they were reluctant to pass messages to LTC. Seiffert through another element. The combat controllers had to speak with the ground elements face-to-face or not at all.

Major Jesse Johnson and the road watch team used hand-held radios to communicate within their element.[104] However, these radios were not compatible with the military radios on the aircraft. While useful for directing the activity of the road watch team, they still had to speak to LTC. Kyle and Colonel Beckwith and every other element face-to-face. Had the other ground elements been issued compatible hand-held radios (a simple and inexpensive solution) control would have been significantly improved. As it was critical reports, such as the approach of the Iranian fuel tanker, were not relayed to LTC. Kyle or Colonel Beckwith. Thus the road watch team was forced to act and then report what they had done face-to-face. Colonel Beckwith (an experienced combat veteran of Vietnam) would certainly have had the presence of mind to stop a young Ranger about to fire a LAW into a fuel tanker, had he been notified of the Ranger's intention. This would have considerably lessened the level of chaos after the truck exploded and burned for an hour.

Not even the four major ground element commanders could speak to each other without physically meeting in the swirling dust and darkness. Here the most damning criticism is found in LTC. Kyle's rebuttal to those analyzing the failed operation:

> There has been a multitude of criticism about the command arrangements at Desert-I. The fault-finders focus on there being four commanders at the scene without visible identification, incompatible radios, and no agreed-upon plan, not even a designated location for the commander. I would agree it could have been done better, but in the final analysis it had nothing to do with the failure of the mission.[105]

The confusion at Desert One placed the rescue force in a highly-stressful situation from which it could not extricate itself. Had the rescue force not been put into a chaotic, unforeseen situation it may have still been able to complete the mission in spite significant force design flaws. The absence of Unity of Command did not damn the mission to failure, but it did damn the mission to failure under stress. Kyle's admission that there was "no agreed-upon plan" is incontrovertible

evidence of incompetent leadership and negligent planning. Four major element commanders from three separate services directing thirteen sub-elements for the first time in a dangerous mission behind enemy lines at night is a fatally flawed course of action.

Colonel Beckwith was similarly wrongheaded. The Delta Force wore a para-military uniform of blue jeans and wool caps during the mission. Colonel Beckwith stated: "No one wore any rank. There was no need to."[106] In making that statement, Colonel Beckwith revealed he had only considered the requirement to recognize leadership within his own element in daylight conditions. The shortsightedness of his view was apparent at Desert One when it became impossible to locate key individuals. This failure to think through the ramifications of decisions regarding simple things, like uniforms and identification aids, is compounded in the unintended outcomes of more complex issues, like communications. Colonel Beckwith's cavalier disregard for attention to detail perhaps could be handled in a small, intimate unit like a commando force executing a simple mission. It is a recipe for disaster by assumption in the working of a complex operation.

Far worse, however, is the casual, off-hand fashion in which overall responsibility for operations at Desert One was delegated by Major General Vaught, the JTF commander *in absentia*. Beckwith describes how Major General Vaught timidly decidedly who should be in charge at Desert One:

> 'Charlie, we gotta figure out command at Desert One. Do you want it?'
> 'I don't really know whether I do or not. I see it only as a transient place.'
> 'Jim Kyle, by rights, oughta have it. Most of the activities at Desert One are air-related - landing and refueling.'
> 'I agree with you, General. I don't have time to fool with this. I gotta get my equipment and men off the 130s and onto the choppers. Once they lift off, I see it then as my operation.'
> 'Good. Then we're in agreement. What do you think about my going to Desert One?'

> General Vaught, I don't think that you can help Delta there. I would prefer you back in Egypt, where you can best influence the action.'[107]

The fact that a subordinate would be consulted on a command relationship is not alarming. What is frightening is that a general officer would determine who would be in charge before he decided whether he was going to be there himself. Had General Vaught decided to be at Desert One, as the JTF commander he should have been in charge. Major General Vaught's initial instinct that he should be at Desert One, *at the critical place of the operation*, was correct. His failure to do so is hard to understand. It is evident in their dialogue that Colonel Beckwith was solely concerned with his element; Major General Vaught, however, was responsible for the entire rescue force. His reluctance to command, and apparent inability to recognize that the operation's success depended on elements other than the Delta Force, is troubling. The statement that he could "best influence the action" from Egypt is ludicrous. Even given a real need for General Vaught to remain behind in Egypt, he could have flown into Desert One with the C-130s, supervised the critical operation there, and then flown out of Desert One and back to Egypt before Delta assaulted the embassy. This refusal to leave the headquarters and go forward to the critical place of the operation is weak leadership. Where there is no commander, there can be no Unity of Command.

Confusion over who was in charge of what at Desert One continued in this conspicuous absence of the JTF commander. LTC. Kyle states: "I was taken aback when...told...that I was to be in charge of the roadblock team at Desert-I. What? I didn't know enough about their tactics - it wasn't my bailiwick. I made up my mind right then to turn this function over to Beckwith..."[108]

The C3 design of the rescue force was poor. The flaws in the design range from issues of radio compatibility to the location of the JTF commander. The C3 of the JTF at Desert One was not well-planned, and because of poor C3 planning, design and execution the operation encountered significant problems.

As with so many other issues surrounding the planning of Operation Eagle Claw, C3 was a loosely understood arrangement that came apart under stress.

OPERATIONS SECURITY

Another factor contributing to the tragic events of Desert One was the extreme attention, even obsession, with Operational Security (OPSEC). The roots of the obsession with OPSEC came from three major concerns: the need for absolute secrecy in order for the mission to be successful, an incident that became known as the "Constellation Fiasco," and the thick shroud of secrecy surrounding the covert Delta Force.

The need for absolute secrecy is simple to explain. The hostages were, with the exception of three individuals, being held in the same compound.[109] The three individuals outside the embassy compound, however, were themselves collocated at the Iranian Ministry of Defense. It may not have occurred to the inexperienced militant students to seriously consider dispersing the hostages into multiple locations. If they did consider dispersing the hostages across Tehran, then they may have thought it unnecessary. It is also possible the students did not have the transportation, communication and organizational infrastructure to support a coherent hostage-holding operation separated into several cells across a large city. The initial intent of the militant students was not, after all, to start a prolonged crisis, but to make a symbolic gesture by invading the embassy.[110] Only when Khomeini gave their actions his public blessing did the student's goal change.[111] However, by keeping the hostages in the American Embassy the students had unwittingly greatly simplified the task of the rescue force. The rescue force did not have to locate the hostages, and the layout of the grounds and floorplans were readily available. This significant advantage could be lost overnight if the militant students suspected a rescue attempt was imminent. Secrecy was essential to gain surprise for the assault and for quickly gathering all the hostages together for rapid extraction. Should the militants separate the hostages into multiple, unknown locations, the rescue mission would not have

been feasible.

The past failure to maintain operations security, "The Constellation Fiasco," also feed the obsession with OPSEC.[112] Early in the crisis the U.S. Navy prepared to deploy a force into the Indian Ocean as a symbol of American strength and to position for contingencies. Unfortunately, a sailor phoned home to Nebraska to tell his family where he was going. The information was picked up by the United Press International, and within hours the classified deployment was reported on the news wires. Making the problem worse, the story was in the press before President Carter was briefed on the decision to deploy the force. Normally, President Carter's approval was needed to authorize such a large naval movement during a crisis. However, the JCS had considered this move only a precaution, and had not briefed the President.

The press did not believe the Administration's denials that a deployment was ordered. The press insinuated that President Carter had changed his mind under pressure. Gary Sick describes the fallout of this incident:

> Within the government, the incident led to some very different conclusions. The almost instantaneous leak of a classified movement order to U.S. forces was regarded by senior officials in Washington as distressing evidence that normal military channels could not be trusted in matters of any political sensitivity. The military, in turn, was intensely embarrassed at its failure to maintain security. Both of these 'lessons' would be remembered vividly more than a year later when planning was under way for the attempted rescue mission of the hostages in Tehran. Ironically, partly as a result of this episode, extreme and unorthodox security measures were adopted during the planning and execution of the rescue mission which may have contributed to its failure.[113]

The unintended outcome of the "Constellation Fiasco" was the Administration's and military's extreme concern with Operation Eagle Claw's OPSEC. The military's obsession with OPSEC eventually led to elements within the rescue force keeping each other in the dark.

The final factor breeding an unhealthy attention to operations security was Colonel Beckwith's insistence that the Delta Force remain unknown. The Delta Force was normally cloistered in an isolated facility at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. This secrecy combined with the relative newness of the organization made Delta's existence a well-kept secret even at Fort Bragg. Colonel Beckwith was determined to keep his unit secret, even to some forces involved in the rescue operation. The rescue force's unfamiliarity with each other added to confusion at Desert One. The rescue force would not truly be a team, but a collection of strangers.

The compartmentalization within the rescue force itself, men who were preparing to embark on a dangerous mission together, reached the inane level of comic absurdity. Weather officers tasked with forecasting the weather along the flight routes were not permitted to speak with pilots. Meteorologists were tasked to prepare a weather annex for the pilots to consult - an annex that described the condition of dust clouds called Haboobs that would later test the helicopters and their crews to their limits - but the helicopter pilots never saw the document.[114] Delta Force, typically, was sequestered from other rescue force elements. The Deputy Commander of the JTF was excluded from meetings between Colonel Beckwith and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[115] Contingency operations were not briefed to sister elements.

The most damning criticism is implicit in the tactfully worded findings of the Special Operations Review Group: "The rigid compartmentalization during the early stages is considered to have been a deterrent to training and readiness progress. Clearly, during the final stages of preparation, all element leaders should have been thoroughly familiar with the overall plan. This could have enhanced greater integration of all elements of the force."[116] There was no single commander with authority over all the elements at Desert One. The complete plan was not known by every element. Element commanders did not know what the other elements were doing. *Failure to establish Unity of Command is the hub*

of all confusion at Desert One, from which all errors can be traced.

THE LACK OF REHEARSAL

Another factor contributing to the confused tactical direction at Desert One was the lack of a complete rehearsal. Beckwith states that there were no less than seven full-scale rehearsals.[117] This is, in fact, a deceptive assertion. The fact is that the rescue force did have, as Beckwith maintains, seven *different* rehearsals of *different* parts of the operation. But one of several portions of the operation *not* rehearsed was the full-scale refueling at Desert One. The Holloway Report states: "As complex and difficult as the Desert One scenario was, it had not been fully rehearsed. A training exercise at the western training area conducted on 13-14 April with two C-130s and four H-53s was used to validate the Desert One concept."[118] Refueling the helicopters was not fully or realistically rehearsed. Because of inadequate rehearsal problems that the rescue force would encounter at Desert One, such as blinding sand clouds and deafening noise, would not be experienced until the mission was "for real."

The refueling of the helicopters was not the only element of the plan at Desert One that was not rehearsed. The road watch team that was to play such a critical role in stopping a bus filled with Iranian civilians and blowing up a fuel truck was also an untested element. Kyle states: "Because the Desert-I option came so late, we did not rehearse with the roadblock team during any of our CONUS training. The roadblock team did not get organized, trained, and rehearsed until they were at Wadi Kena."[119] Adding to the complexity was the subordination of the roadblock team, a Ranger element, to the command of Delta operators. Major Jesse Johnson and Captain Wade Ishimoto from Delta controlled the road watch team.[120] The Rangers in the road watch team had never met the Delta operators, and this further complicated the entire situation surrounding a vital security element. The failure to integrate the Rangers and Delta earlier was an unnecessary gamble in light of the complex and dangerous nature of the operation.

Rehearsals are excellent at pointing out weaknesses in a plan. The difficulty of the helicopter refueling and the control of the road watch team caused problems at Desert One. Had these problems been identified and addressed in a CONUS rehearsal, the planners could have improved the ground tactical plan. Unfortunately, these issues and others did not surface until the rescue force was executing a very complex operation.

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The physical conditions at Desert One were not conducive to control of an ad hoc unit performing a difficult mission. The problem is as easy to understand as it was difficult to overcome. In conducting a standard staff risk assessment of an operation, darkness increases the risk value ascribed to the mission under evaluation. Subsequent factors compounding the difficulty have a "value-added" effect that increases exponentially and not arithmetically. Planners must counter adverse conditions while lessening the effects of factors they can not influence.

For Operation Eagle Claw darkness was a necessary condition for surprise. The rescue force did take those measures it could to offset the increased risk implicit in a night operation. Measures included using Night Observation Devices (NOD), special filters for the fixed-wing aircraft lights that permitted increased visibility with the NODs, visible landing lights for the aircraft emplaced by CIA agents at Desert One weeks earlier, chemical lights to aid in control, and other measures routine to military night operations. Although the planners did not foresee all the problems caused by the darkness, adequate measures were taken by the rescue force to lessen the impact of darkness on the operators, *with the important exception of aids for leader recognition.*

One condition, however, that was not recognized as a potential difficulty was the noise. By failing to conduct a full-scale rehearsal of the tasks at Desert One, the rescue force experienced this level of noise for the first time. The noise generated by six heavy-lift helicopters and four turbo-fan powered C-130s each running all their engines was tremendous. The noise was deafening, as first-hand

testimony makes clear: "The sound was nearly deafening. To communicate it was necessary to put your face right up to the other person's and yell - or use hand and arm signals."[121]

Billowing clouds of sand and dust blasted by the C-130s and the helicopters added to the confusion. The level of obscuration was not expected by either the helicopter pilots or the ground forces. It was physically painful to move in the sand blasts, and a curtain of gritty sand and powdery dust severely degraded vision. This hampering of vision due to the ground conditions of Desert One was a complete surprise to the helicopter pilots, who had been briefed that the floor of Desert One was "as clean swept as a parking lot."[122]

The physical environment of Desert One is the easiest detractor to describe. Its simplicity, however, belies the profound impact it had on the operation. Kyle describes the crash of the RH-53 helicopter and the EC-130 aircraft.

> The helicopter lifted off and was immediately engulfed in dust. I saw the controller moving toward the C-130 to get away from the swirling dust cloud. As I watched, the helicopter lifted about twenty-five feet off the ground, started to drift left and then disappeared in the dust.[123]

It is difficult to move a helicopter around other helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, and dismounted personnel at a primitive site at night. The presence of billowing clouds of sand and dust added to the difficulty. The physical environment made execution of Operation Eagle Claw difficult, and significantly contributed to the mission's failure.

The explanation for the cause of the crash may have perished with the pilot, but the noise, blowing sand, and confusion of the physical environment doubtless contributed to the problem. The probability of a crash while maneuvering around other aircraft given the conditions at Desert One was greater than any pilot flying that night had ever confronted. LTC. Kyle and his planners should have recognized this fact and allowed substantial margins of safety.

Weather and terrain are basic factors that military planners consider. The conditions at Desert One were not adequately foreseen by the planners.

The facts unequivocally point out that the operation at Desert One was neither well-planned, nor well-rehearsed. Such a combination would spell trouble at a daylight rifle range at a training facility. It spelled disaster for a night combat operation involving fixed and rotary wing aircraft behind enemy lines.

Chapter Four: Post Mortem

"I entered at 4:50 and told the President that I needed to talk with him immediately and alone. He looked startled..."[124]

During the death throes of Operation Eagle Claw the scene half a world away was similarly tragic. The President of the United States cradled his head in his arms, while his National Security Adviser crouched in front of his desk.[125] At a loss to explain the debacle to the nation, President Carter asked for the words of another President faced with a military fiasco: President Kennedy's speech following the Bay of Pigs.

It seems tactical disasters that result in operational and strategic defeat are recurring phenomena in American foreign policy. There is no reason to believe that the future will provide any fewer opportunities for disaster. The promise of military history is that its detailed understanding may allow one to avoid the mistakes of the past. If this promise is true Operation Eagle Claw is certainly worthy of study.

The Holloway Report concludes that two factors were fundamentally related to most problems with Operation Eagle Claw: the "ad hoc nature of the organization and planning," and excessive concern for OPSEC.[126] Distilling the report's conclusion even further, the operation's Achilles' Heel was the lack of Unity of Command. The OPSEC compartmentalization of the rescue force was nothing more than the fracturing of the force along principally service lines. The fractured nature of the force was a by-product of bringing together an ad hoc organization.

The lack of Unity of Command can be seen in the composition of the rescue force itself. The rescue force consisted of thirteen separate elements. These thirteen elements were controlled by four major commanders. The four commanders were all present at one site. Additionally, the four commanders were drawn from three separate services. And the JTF Commander, Major

General Vaught, was effectively incommunicado in Egypt.

The rescue force could have overcome even this deplorable force design and disposition if it had collocated at a training site during the months of preparation. Had there been a leader with the will and determination to make it happen the force could have truly been forged into a single element. Instead, our nation's most senior military officers saw the operation from a more parochial perspective, and they forgot the principle of war Unity of Command. Instead of a team responding to unforeseen events at Desert One, one sees the disintegration of the force along service lines into little more than a panic-stricken mob.

In the movement to and the actions at Desert One the absence of Unity of Command again surfaces as the prime factor leading to the disintegration of the rescue force. Enroute to what was to be a link-up with other force elements, the C-130 flight and the helicopter formation did not share information concerning each other's movement or weather conditions enroute.[127] Had they done so, the delay and confusion caused by the haboobs would have been at least partially offset. As it was, they were two distinct elements concerned about their own movement to Desert One. Likewise, the Delta Force took pains to keep itself isolated from the helicopter pilots and other elements in the rescue force. This isolation and distinct separateness of all the elements hampered the development of the force as a cohesive entity.

The exercise of command, control and communications also showcases the absence of Unity of Command. The separate communications nets and the incompatibility of the systems and radios acted as fences that not only blocked communications within the rescue force, but reinforced the distinctness of the separate elements. The inability to talk with other elements on the ground at Desert One guaranteed that the reaction to the aircraft collision would be confused and dictated by the different elements in a piecemeal approach.

Excessive secrecy helped sabotage the mission. The Delta Force's attitude, as expressed by their commander Colonel Beckwith, appeared to be that

they were just along for the ride until it was their turn at bat.[128] This is a dangerous attitude when the survival of many hangs on the ability to work as a team. More than just reinforcing the individual character of the elements, OPSEC as practiced by the rescue force was literally keeping secrets from the people most able to help out.

The lack of a comprehensive, full-scale rehearsal overarches all the issues regarding the absence of Unity of Command. A rehearsal under conditions that approximate the mission will reveal problems with a plan better than any other tool. Underestimating the complexity of an operation to the point where a proper rehearsal is not conducted can only be understood as *professional arrogance.* The cost was an entire host of unforeseen events that compounded their negative effects until the rescue force could not even board parked aircraft in an orderly manner. The chaos was exacerbated by the failure of on-scene leaders to keep their wits about them and their units under their firm control during an emergency.

The physical environment surrounding a unit during the execution of a mission is neutral, although often unforgiving. It is not a malevolent force that conspires to thwart the heroic efforts of a valiant few. Those who typify it as such are usually those who have fallen victim to their own lack of foresight in dealing with it. What can be anticipated in the physical environment can be countered by active measures taken to mitigate its effects. Poor planning is not anticipating needs created by operating in a given environment. Here as well the absence of Unity of Command surfaced as the hub of all problems. The separate elements thought of their own welfare and requirements, with the result that no single commander at Desert One was looking out for the *collective* welfare of the rescue force in dealing with the dust, noise, darkness, and unfamiliar terrain. This complete absence of leadership and character is typified in General Vaught's discussion with Colonel Beckwith as to whether the refueling operation justified Colonel Beckwith's attention, let alone Vaught's personal presence as a general

officer.

In short, Operation Eagle Claw's epitaph is that "Where there is no vision, the people perish." There was no strong and resolute leader at the JTF level capable of bringing strong-willed subordinates under his control. The absence of Unity of Command at the JTF level contributed to a myopic preoccupation by the subordinate leaders with their own responsibilities. The elements often worked at cross purposes to the greater good of the rescue force. There was no military leader with vision and will at the JTF level .

At the national level, however, the Unity of Command was strong. Dr. Brzezinski seemed untroubled in the role of the Presidential Cabinet's *bete noire*. He forced his will with officials not easily swayed or intimidated. He had a clear vision of what he wanted, and he made it happen. The Holloway Report was correct in its assessment, "Command and control was excellent at the upper echelons, but became more tenuous and fragile at intermediate levels."[129]

Ironically it falls to a retired naval officer serving as a civilian assistant to Dr. Brzezinski, the man who more than anyone is responsible for the rescue attempt, to best sum up the operation:

> To lead is to choose. When the political stalemate of the hostage crisis became intolerable, President Carter approved a rescue mission. He gave the military planners everything they asked for; he made every effort to inform himself about the plan but resisted meddling in the operational details; and when the mission failed he accepted full responsibility without excuses or scapegoating. The rescue mission was a failure, but it was a failure of military execution, not of political judgment or command.[130]

Appendix A: Figures

The following figures are useful in following the routes and actions of the rescue force during Operation Eagle Claw. They are based on similar diagrams and textual information contained throughout James H. Kyle's book The Guts to Try, specifically:

- Figure One is based on a similar diagram on page 179.
- Figure Two is based on a similar diagram on page 241.
- Figure Three is based on a similar diagram on page 244.
- Figure Four is based on a similar diagram on page 180.
- Figure Five is based on a similar diagram on page 183.
- Figure Six is based on a similar diagram on page 182.
- Figure Seven is based on a similar diagram on page 241.
- Figure Eight is based on a similar diagram on page 253.
- Figure Nine is based on a similar diagram on page 256.
- Figure Ten is based on a similar diagram on page 267.
- Figure Eleven is based on a similar diagram on page 270.
- Figure Twelve is based on a similar diagram on page 274.
- Figure Thirteen is based on a similar diagram on page 284.
- Figure Fourteen is based on a similar diagram on page 298.
- Figure Fifteen is based on a similar diagram on page 302.

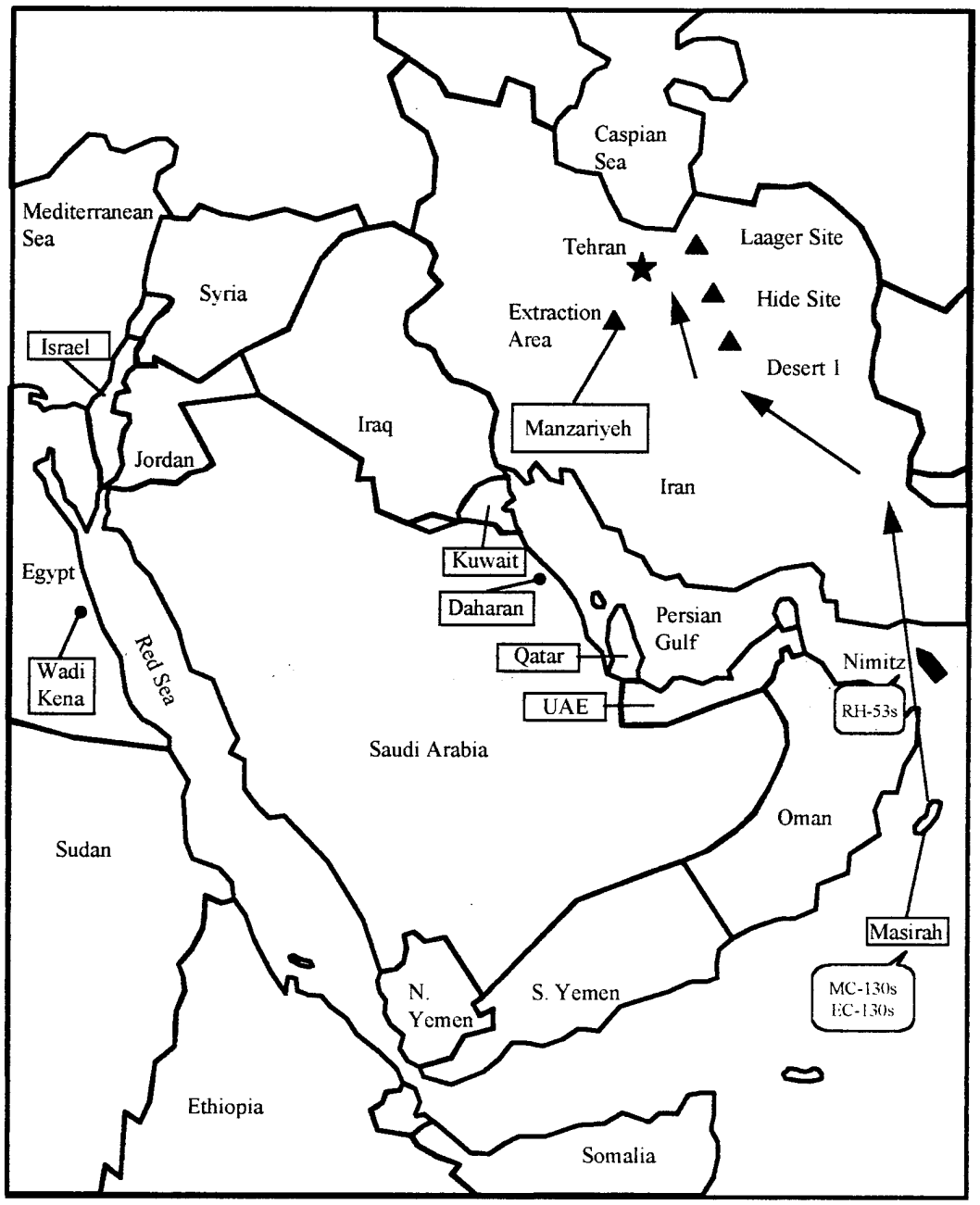

Figure One: Air Routes for Night One

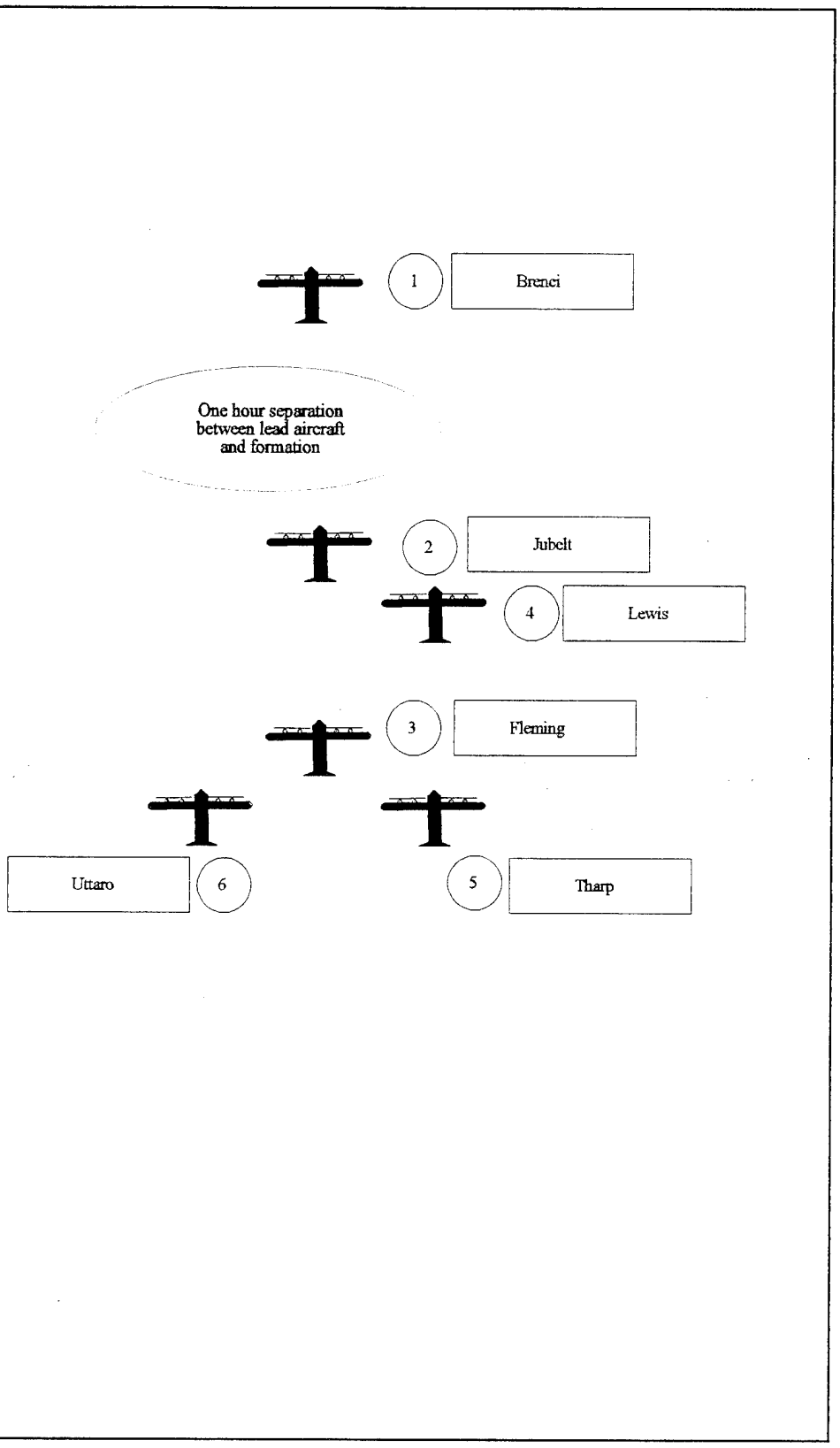

Figure Two: C-130 Air Formations (Planned)

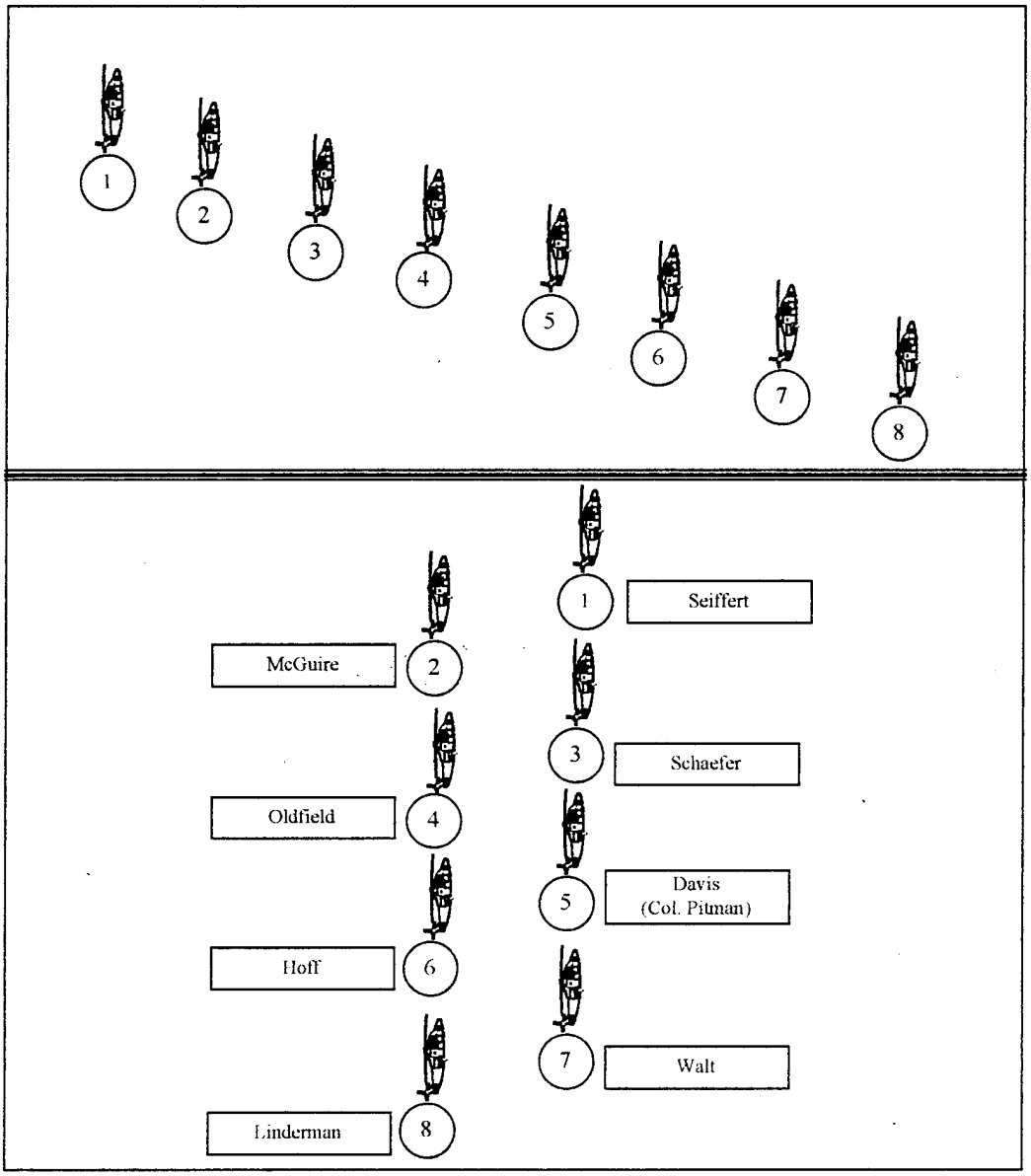

Figure Three: Helicopter Formations (Populated & Remote Areas)

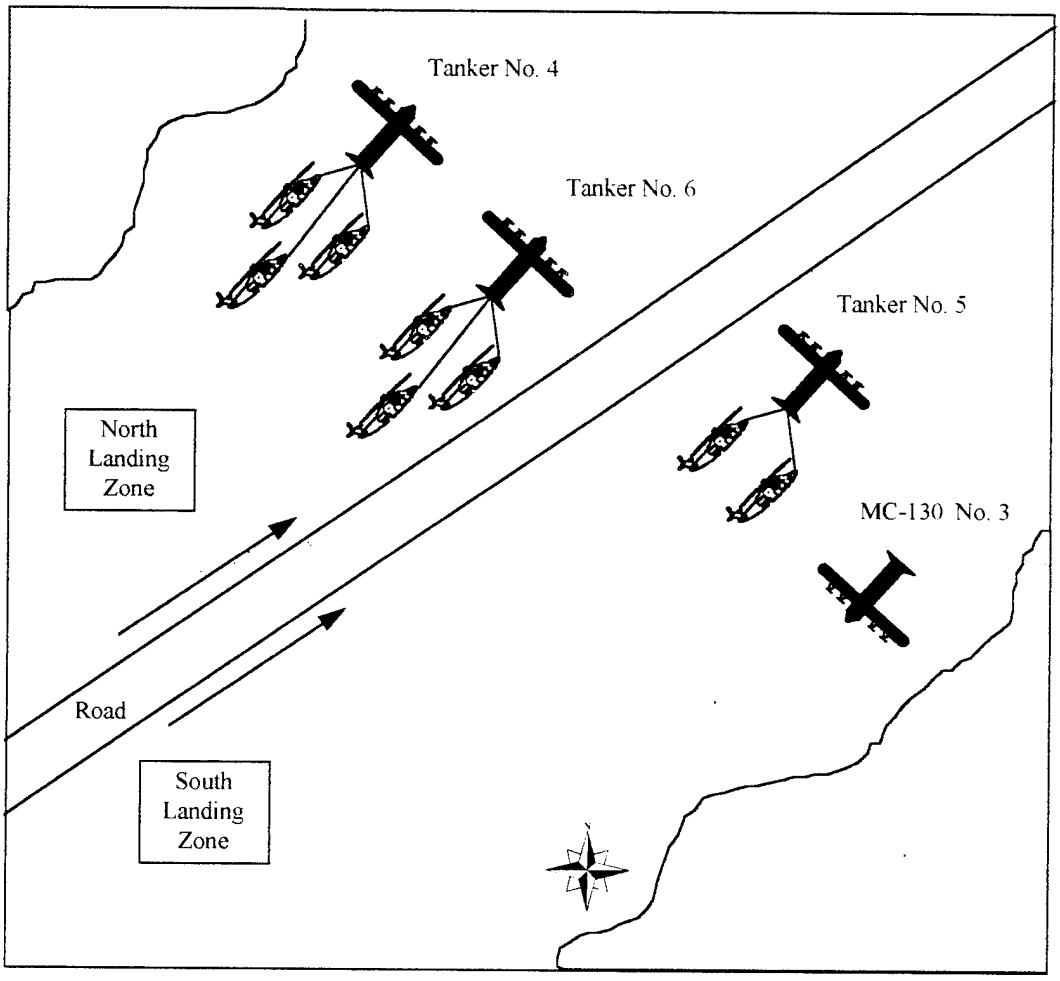

Figure Four: Helicopter Refueling Plan at Desert One

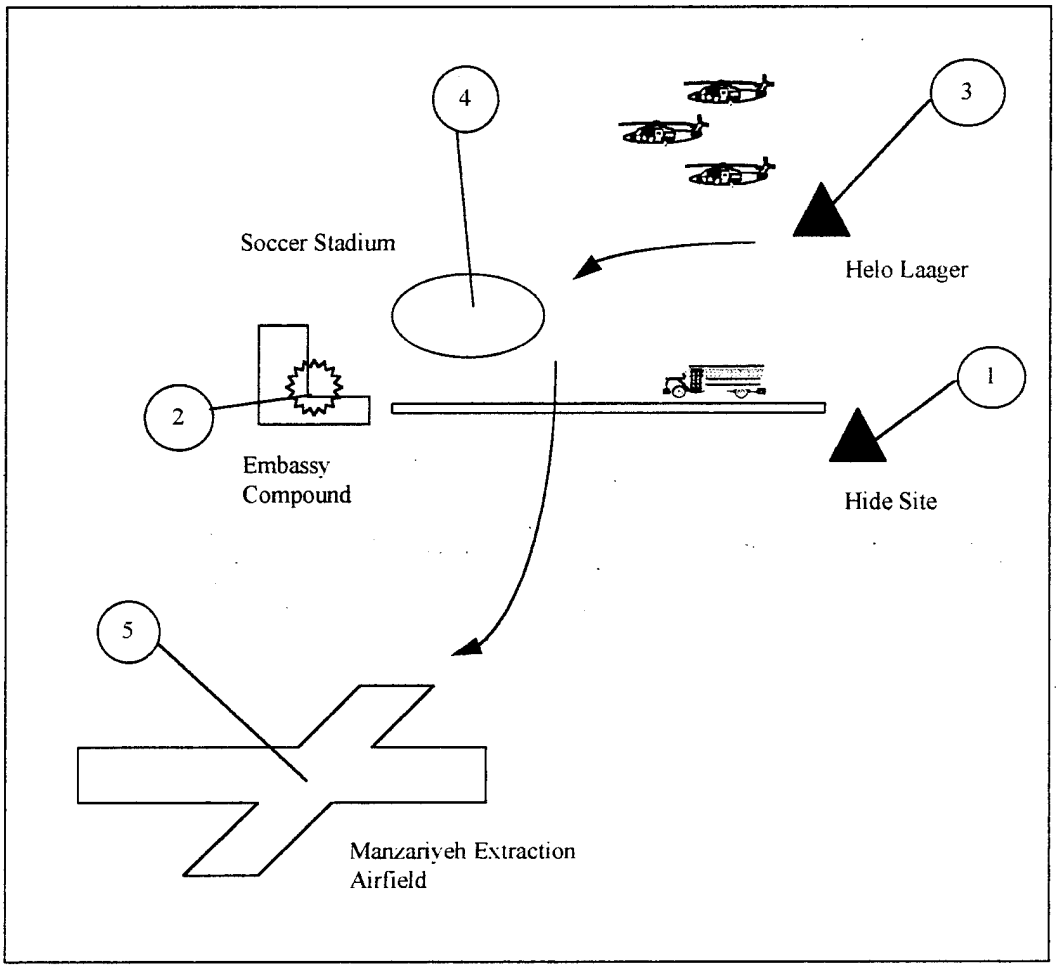

Figure Five: Diagram of Strike Plan

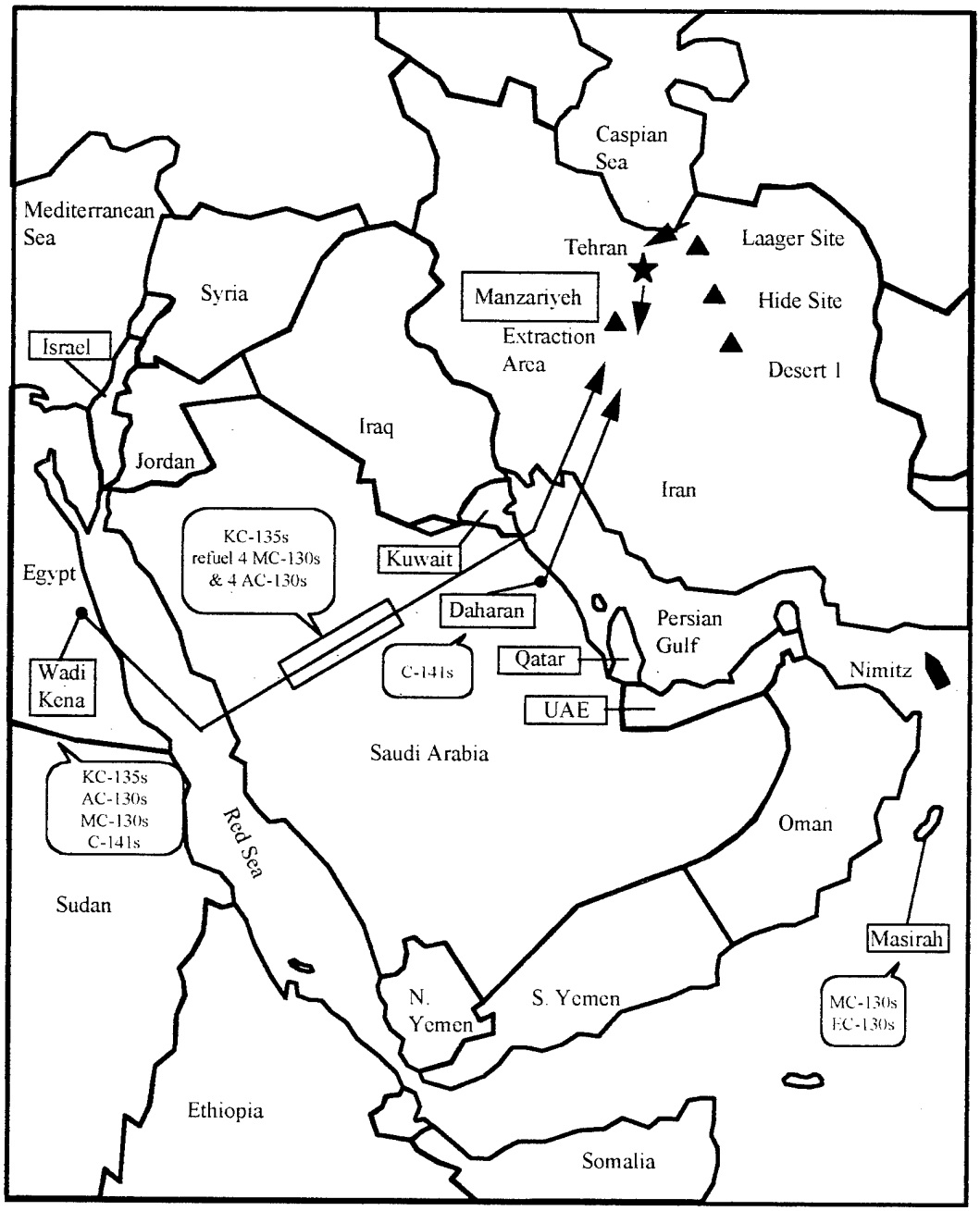

Figure Six: Air Routes for Night Two

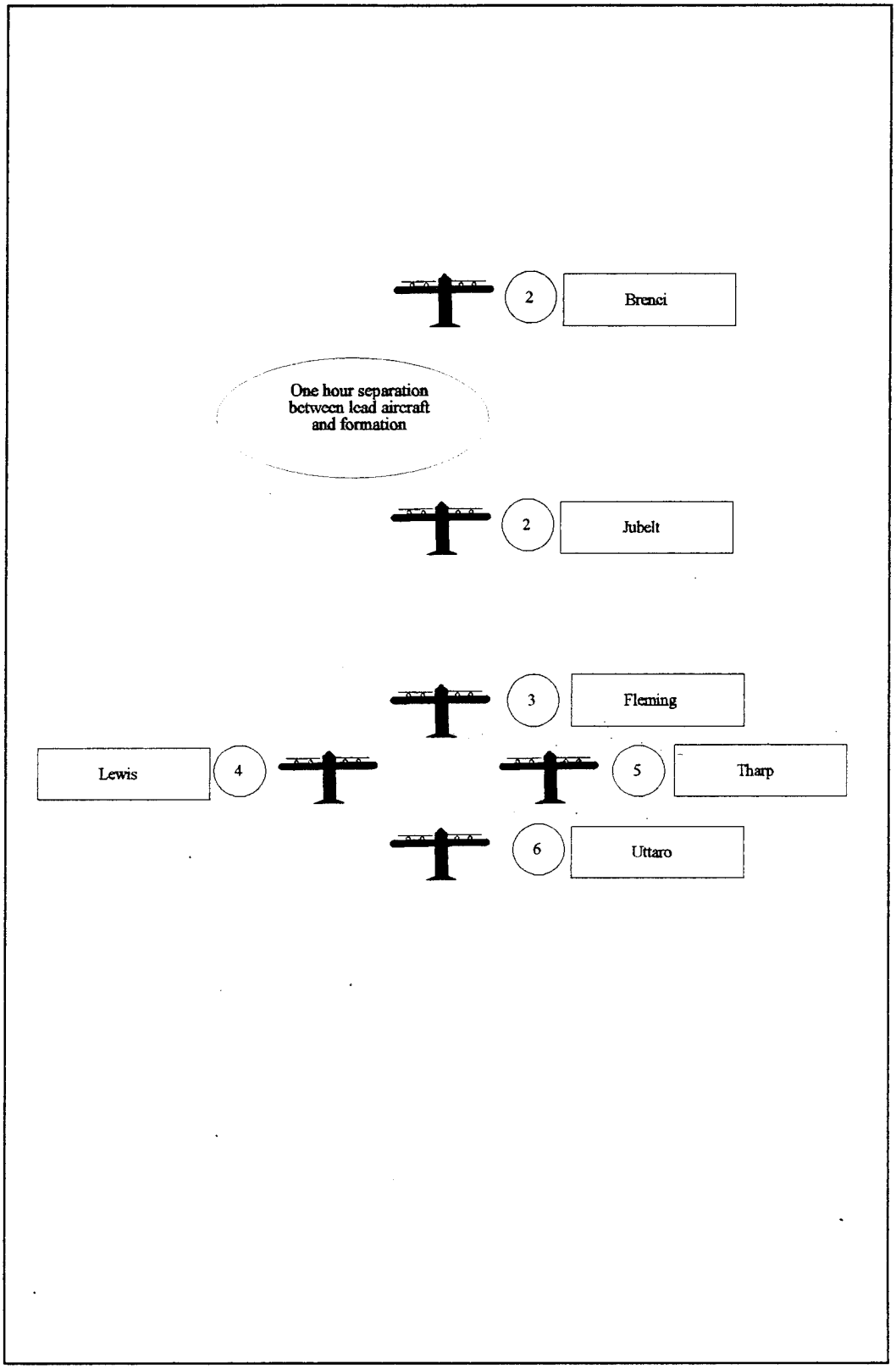

Figure Seven: C-130 Air Formations (Actual)

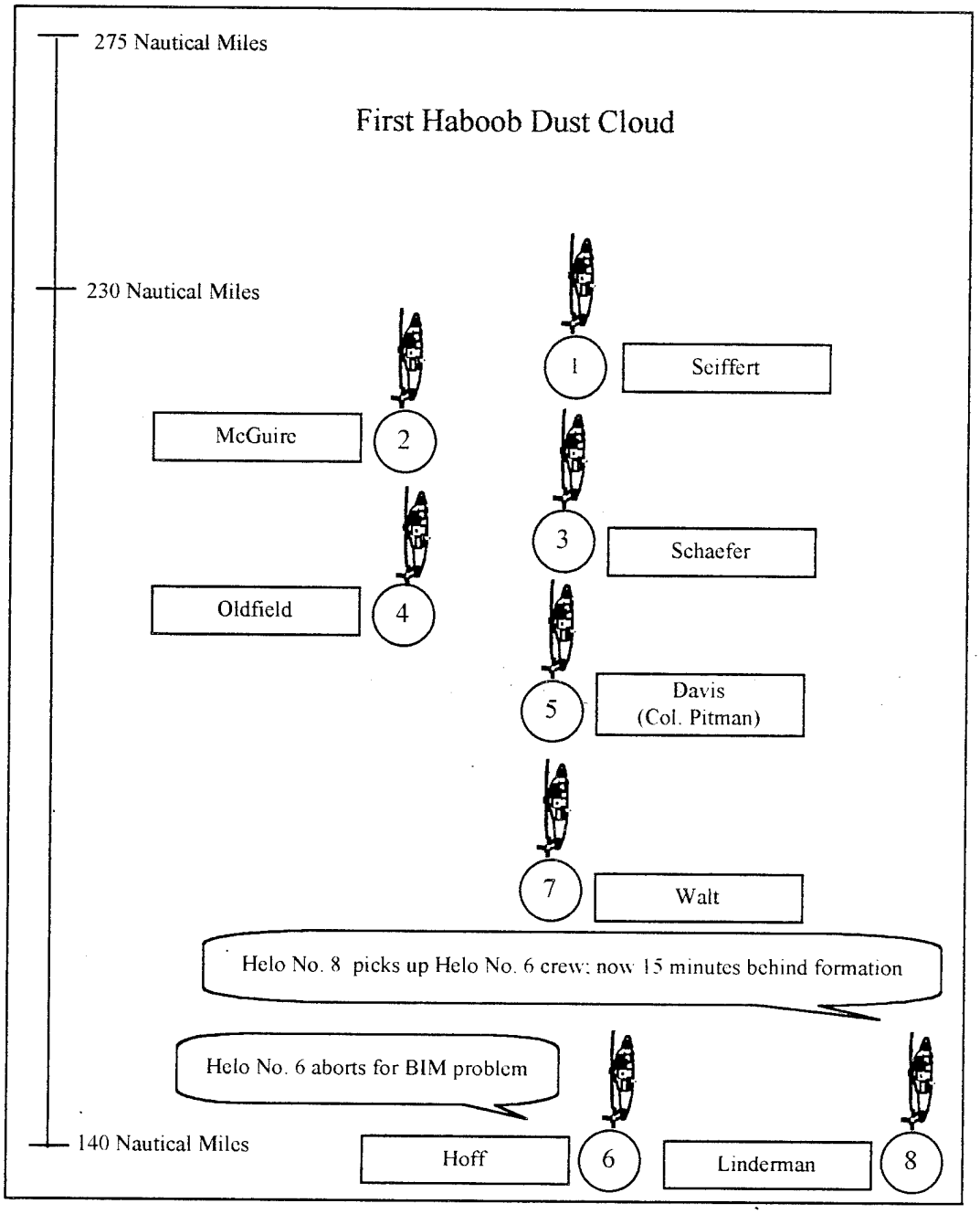

Figure Eight: Helicopters' Disposition on Reaching First Haboob

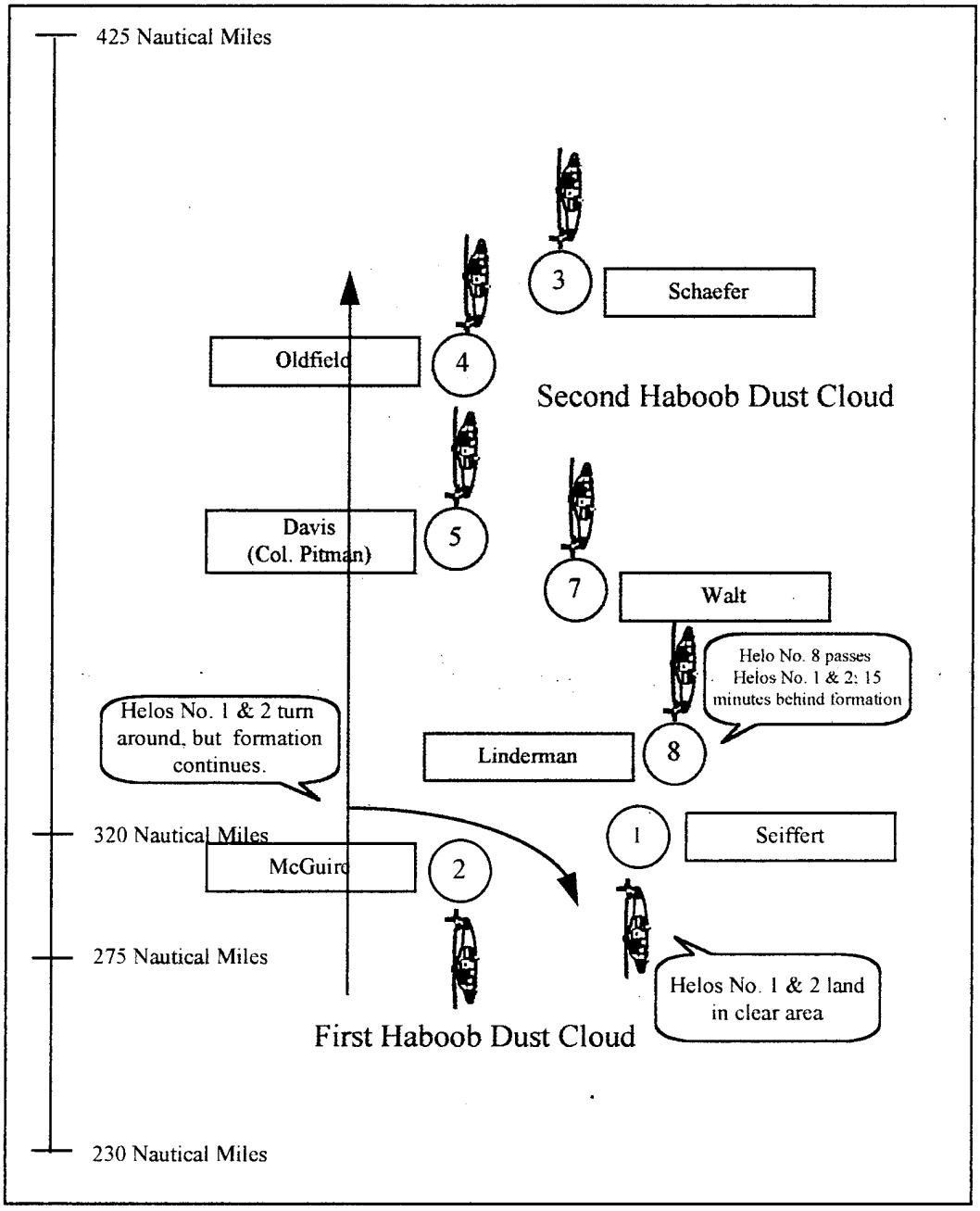

Figure Nine: Helicopters' Disposition on Reaching Second Haboob

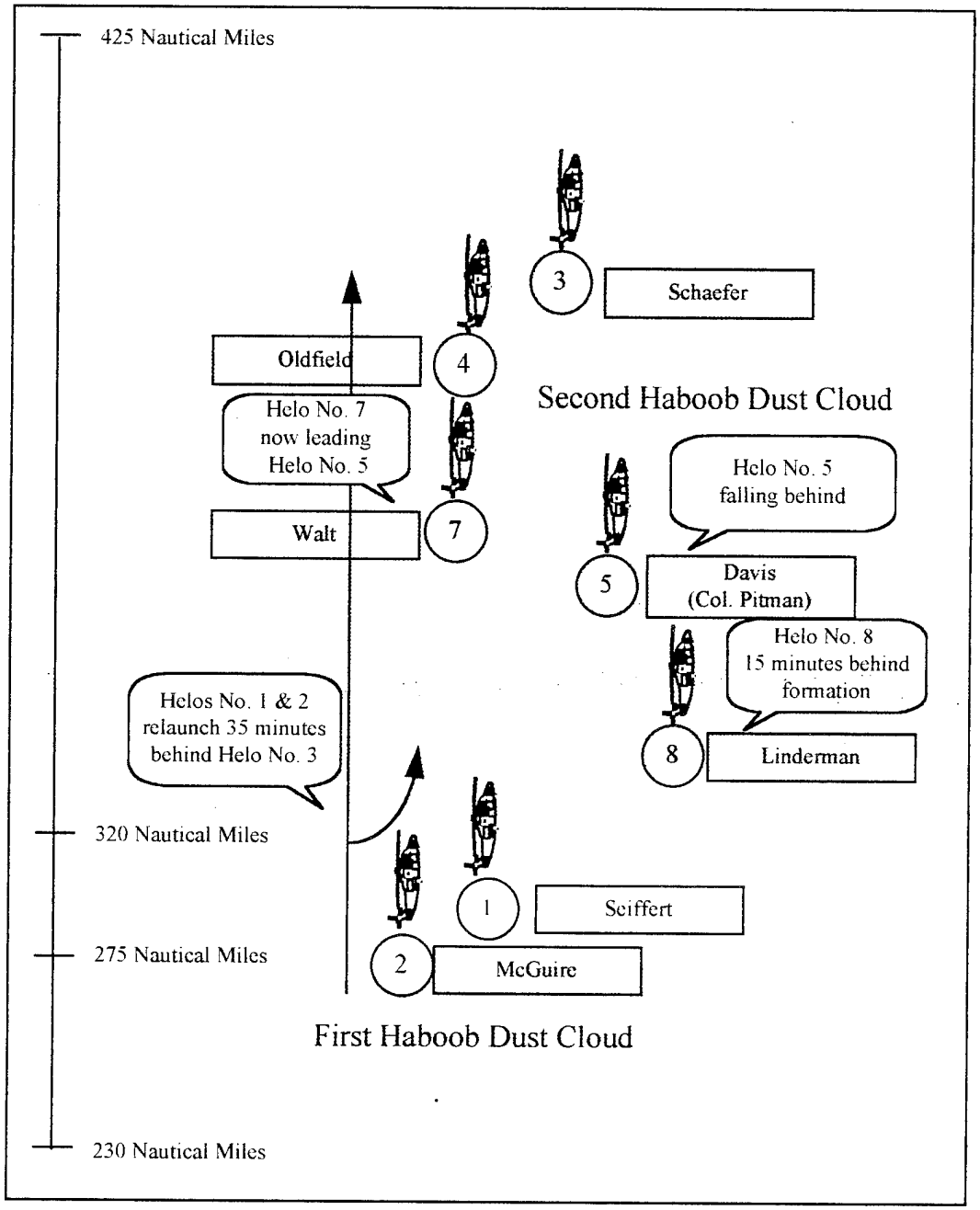

Figure Ten: Helos No. 1 & 2 Relaunch; Formation Degrades Further

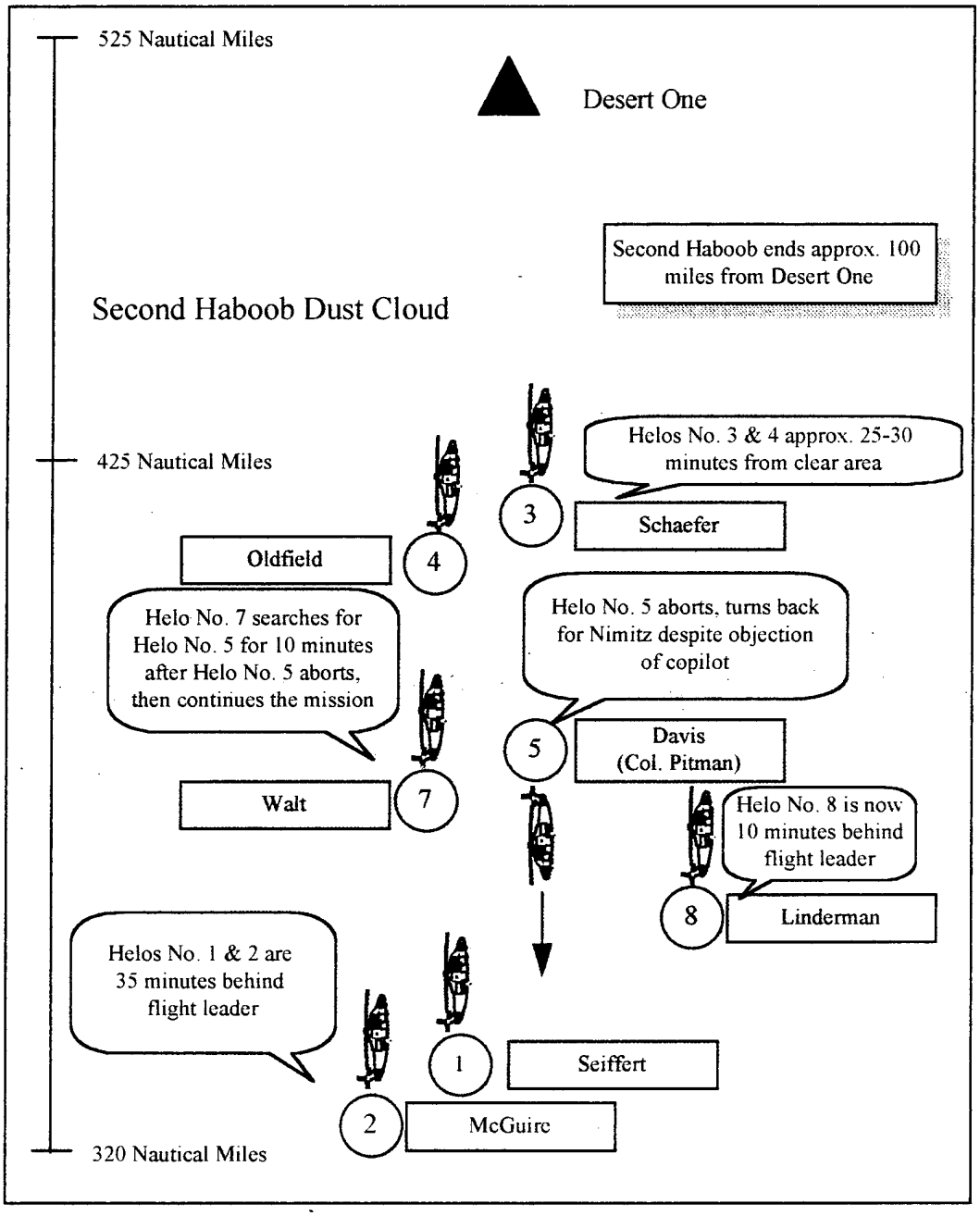

Figure Eleven: Helo No. 5 Turns Back; Formation Dissolves

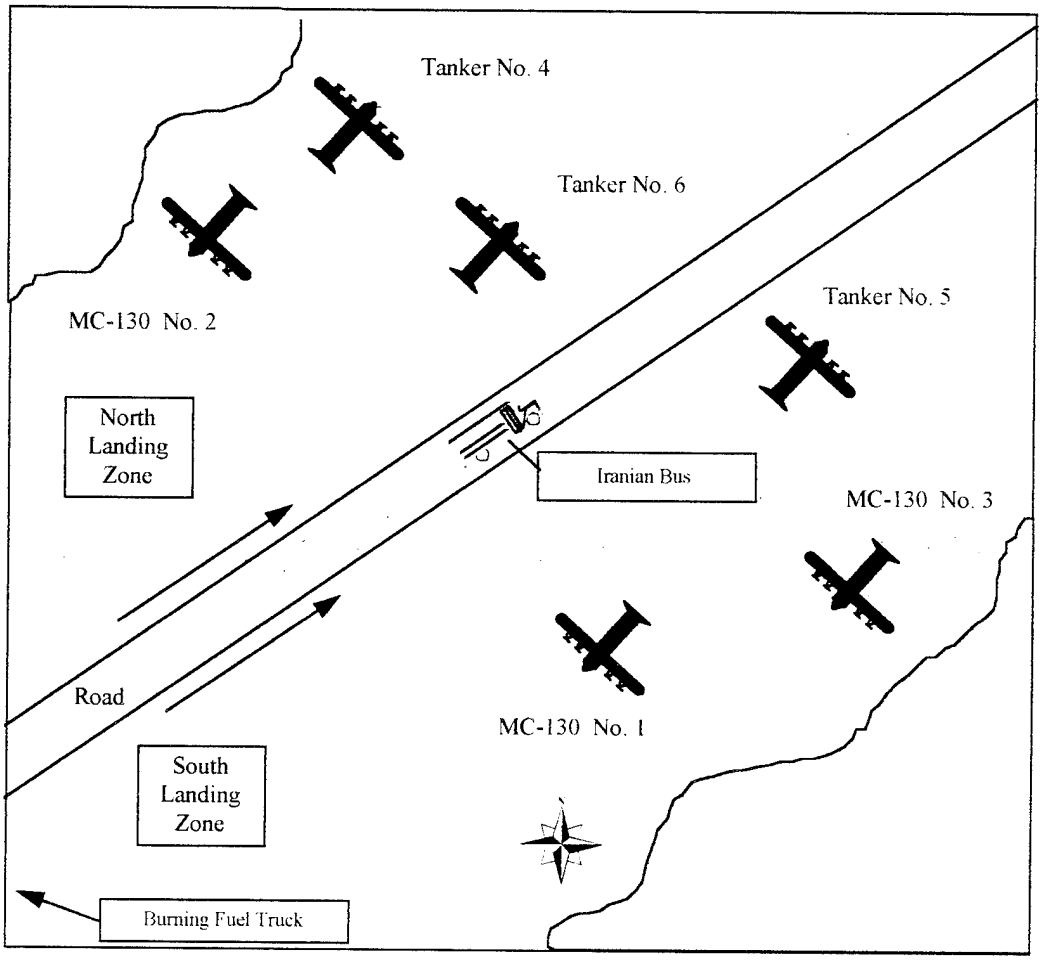

Figure Twelve: C-130s Landing & Parking at Desert One

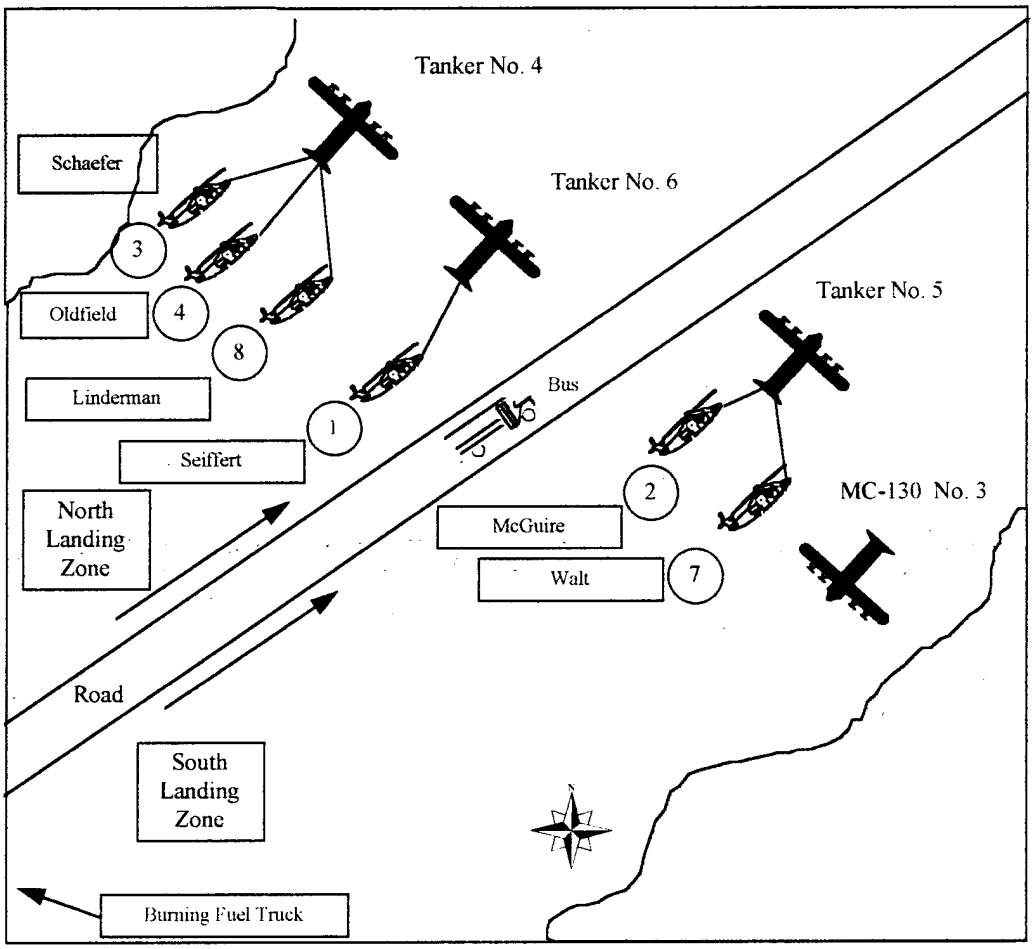

Figure Thirteen: Helos Refueling from Tankers at Desert One

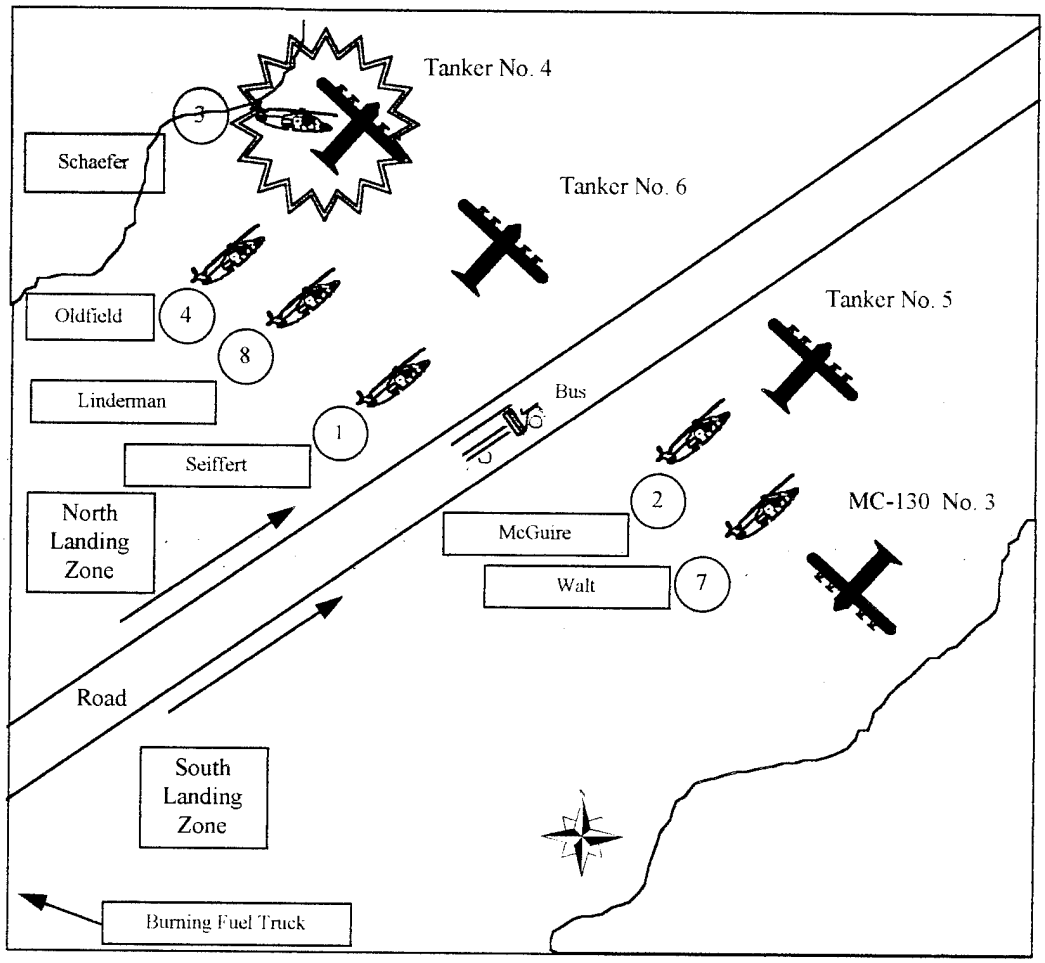

Figure Fourteen: Helicopter No. 3 Crashes Into Tanker No. 4

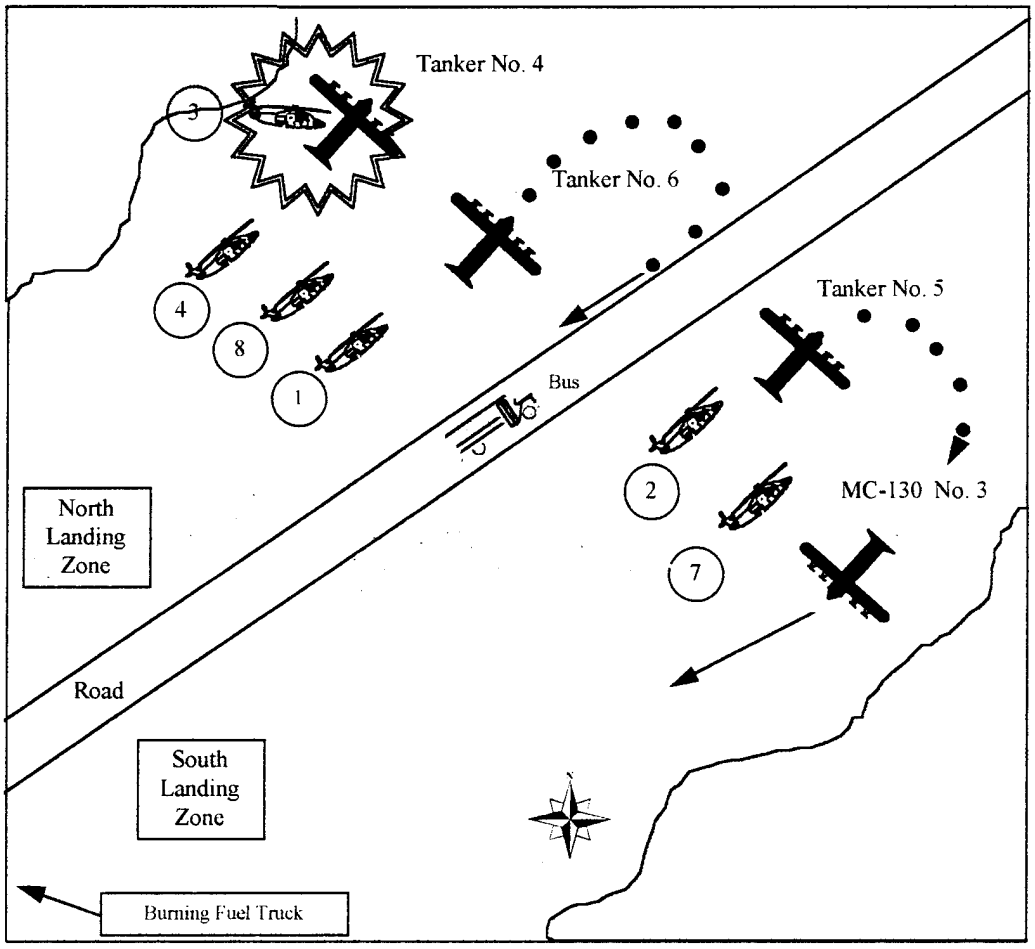

Figure Fifteen: Abandoning Desert One

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4. Terence Smith in his introduction to Zbigniew Brzezinski's article "The Failed Mission," *New York Times Magazine*, 18 April 1982, section 6, pp. 28-79.

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8. Gary Sick, All Fall Down (New York: Random House, 1985), p. 216.

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14. Gary Sick, All Fall Down (New York: Random House, 1985), pp. 70-71.

15. Cyrus Vance, Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 34.

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17. *Ibid.*, p. 373.

18. Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), pp. 444-449.

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22. Gary Sick states: "Curiously, Vance left few enduring imprints on U.S. policy during the Iranian episode. His absence from the original policy meeting on November 2 established a pattern that became familiar as the crisis wore on. Although the secretary of state regularly conferred with the President and Brzezinski by telephone or in private meetings on key policy decisions, he seldom attended policy meetings and generally delegated authority to his deputy, Warren Christopher." Gary Sick, All Fall Down (New York: Random House, 1985), p. 70.

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24. J.L. Holloway, III, Rescue Mission Report (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 1980), p. 3.

25. Carl von Clausewitz, On War, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 303.

26. The details of the plan are described in: James H. Kyle, The Guts to Try (New York: Orion Books, 1990), pp. 178-184, and Col. Charlie A. Beckwith and Donald Knox, Delta Force (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), pp. 253-256.

27. Charlie A. Beckwith and Donald Knox, Delta Force (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), pp. 217-218.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

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33. *Ibid.*

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